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Bruce Babbitt, Straight Man—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

JESSICA HAHN AMONG THE HACKS • ISRAEL'S GREAT KHAKI HOPE

JOSEPH BRODSKY: THE NOBEL LECTURE

THE NEW REPUBLIC

WE SURRENDER!

Charles Krauthammer on Gorbomania

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Fred Barnes on the Other Guy

Morton Kondracke on the Deal

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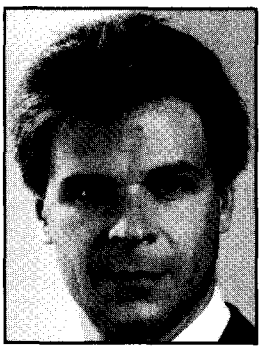

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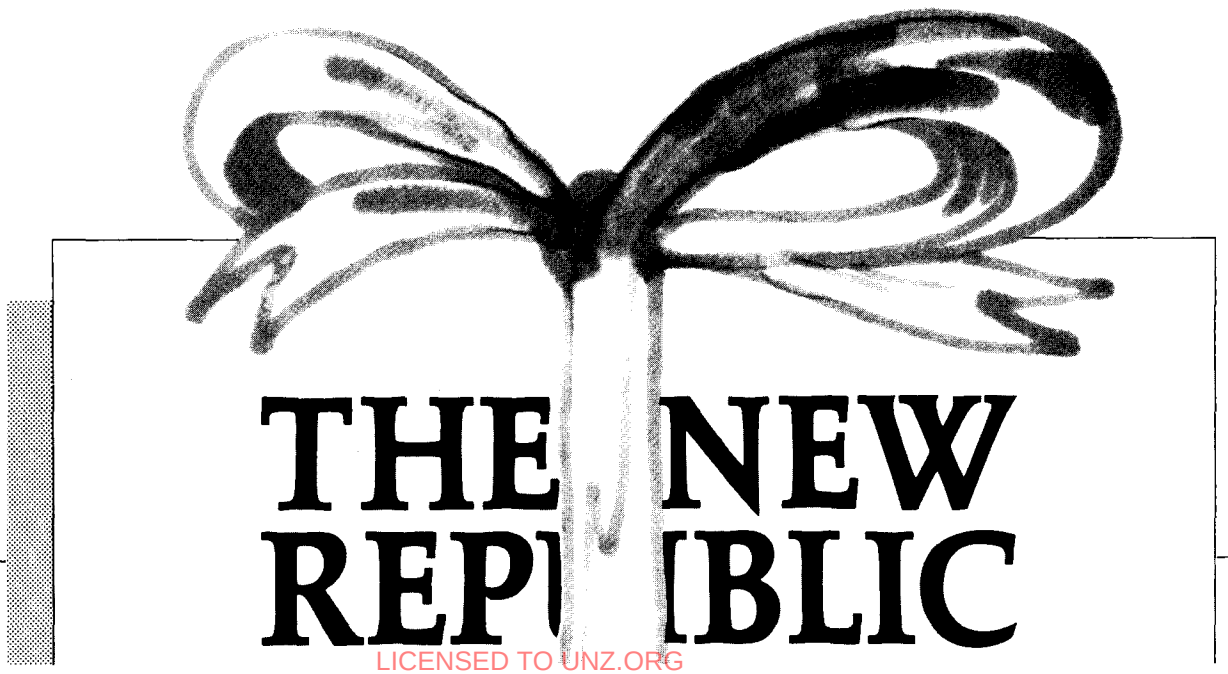

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

FOUNDED 1914 — *A Weekly Journal of Opinion* — ISSUES 3,807 &3,808

WASHINGTON, D.C. — JANUARY 4 & 11, 1988

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CORRESPONDENCE

IN STEREO-TYPE

To the editors:

I have been a reader of THE NEW REPUBLIC for many years. In most cases, I have found it to be a magazine of high quality, insight, and taste. I was, however, appalled and greatly angered by your October 26, 1987, cover. I am only occasionally surprised at how well and alive racism is in this country. It is becoming more alarming and obvious that not only is racism alive and well, but that there is collusion going on between various institutions to indict black leadership, especially black men. Your cover was not only racist, it was insulting to black men and black women and highly disrespectful of a major leader of our community and of a major city. All the stereotypes were present and you made your point well. The problem is that, like the falsely applied charges against the mayor that have no point, your cover also has no point. I can only conclude that it is a subtle display of the true nature of a magazine that had me fooled as somehow being more honest than most in the communication industry. I am glad that I now know the truth so I won't waste time buying THE NEW REPUBLIC anymore.

I sincerely believe you owe Mayor Barry and the black community a public apology.

REV. CANON KWASI A. THORNELL
Canon Missioner, Washington Cathedral
Washington, D.C.

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I sincerely believe you owe Mayor Barry and the black community a public apology for your despicable attack.

DALTON D. DOWNS
Rector, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church
Washington, D.C.

SOUTHERN STRATEGY REVISED

To the editors:

TNR's cover story on Al Gore ("The Southern Strategist" by Morton Kondracke, December 7) gives hope to those who would like to see the Democratic Party regain its historic common sense on national security issues. Moreover, at a November 16 speech before the Foreign Policy Association in New York, the candidate appeared to rankle a few Gorbophiles with a refreshingly tough-minded assessment of Soviet intentions. My problem is not with candidate Gore, or even with former Representative Gore, but rather with current Senator Gore's voting record on defense matters. Between 1984 and 1986, his "arms control rating" as compiled by the left-wing Council for a Livable World went from 29 percent to 88 percent. A similar rating from the Professionals' Coalition for Nuclear Arms Control rose from 54 percent in '84 to 100 percent in '86, a record more in tune with the Iowa Dem-disarmers that with Southern Democrats or the electorate as a whole. Let us hope that Senator Gore's legislative prose will catch up with his campaign poetry before we get saddled with another Southern president who is a dove in hawk's clothing.

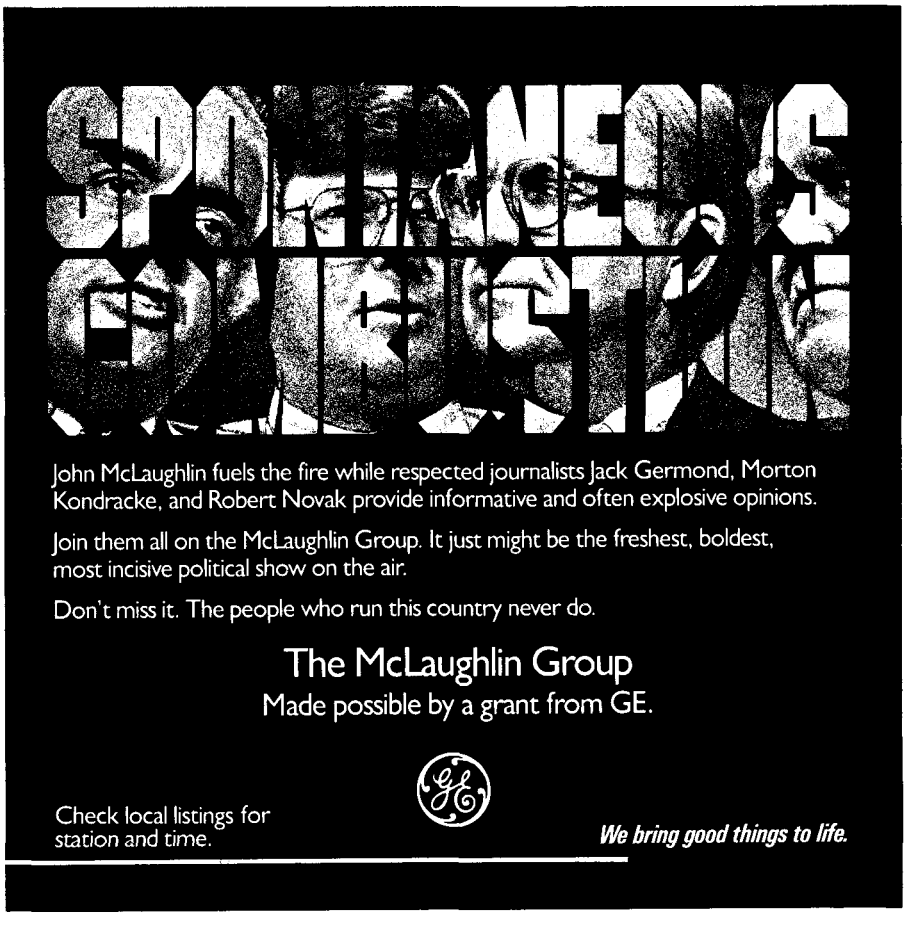
WILLIAM C. BODIE
New York, New York

GORBO AND STALIN

To the editors:

Adam P. Ulam attacks Mikhail Gorbachev for being insufficiently anti-Stalinist ("Moscow Stalling," Decem-

continued on page 41


SPONTANEOUS
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John McLaughlin fuels the fire while respected journalists Jack Germond, Morton Kondracke, and Robert Novak provide informative and often explosive opinions.
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THE NEW REPUBLIC
JANUARY 4 & 11, 1988

THE DEPARTMENT OF FAT

"Elevation to the Cabinet eases interface with the other senior government agencies in the country, saves time in that mutual interest can be expedited, and puts the Veterans Administration in a position where factors that are discussed that have a mutual interest can be impacted on by the VA." —Administrator of Veteran Affairs Thomas K. Turnage

With pressing arguments like that in its favor, there's no wonder that every politician in Washington is rushing to sign up for the cause of turning the Veterans Administration into a full Cabinet department. President Reagan, the scourge of big government who came to Washington vowing to abolish two Cabinet departments, endorsed the idea last month on the eve of Veterans Day. "Veterans have always had a strong voice in our government," he said all too accurately, adding the non sequitur: "It's time to give them the recognition they so rightly deserve." Congress, which can't pass a budget to save the nation's currency or the stock market, is implementing this ridiculous proposal in record time. The House, where such legislation has been kicking around for 25 years, has already passed its own elevation bill, 399-17. The Senate seems to be following suit, breezing through its first subcommittee hearing last week with a roster of friendly witnesses from veterans groups and nary a word of criticism. Barring a sudden outbreak of reason, a Secretary of Veterans Affairs—possibly the eloquent Mr. Turnage—will occupy the 19th seat at the White House Cabinet table by midway through next year.

The VA says it wants the respect and high profile conferred by a seat in the Cabinet. If that higher profile leads to greater scrutiny of what the VA actually does, rather than just providing an opportunity to do more of it, advocates of a Veterans Affairs Department may come to regret their overreaching.

Why begrudge veterans a little "recognition"? The truth is that nobody dares begrudge veterans anything. With 27 million living veterans and 51 million dependents and survivors all eligible for some form of benefits, the constituency is perhaps the most extensive in the nation. This, coupled with its undeniable patriotic appeal around election time, make the VA's perhaps the hardest claim for legislators to deny. And the VA has not been above tugging at heartstrings to open purse strings.

The result is an agency with an annual budget of $27.6 billion and 240,000 employees, second in size only to the Defense Department itself. The VA administers $14 billion in compensation and pension programs, the biggest health care system in the nation (including 172 medical centers), the fifth-largest life insurance program, education and retraining subsidies, and a home-loan guarantee program affecting 313,769 veterans and valued at $22 billion in 1986. Twelve Civil War widows are still collecting benefits, and $15 million a year is sent to dependents of veterans of the Spanish-American War, fought some 90 years ago. The VA has been particularly militant and successful in protecting itself. Early attempts by David Stockman's Office of Management and Budget to trim the behemoth agency met with determined opposition. OMB backed down.

Of course nobody is disputing the debt society owes to those who fight in its service, or the government's obligation to provide free lifetime medical care for service-related disabilities. But the VA lists only three million such cases. Yet free or heavily subsidized VA health care is available, under varying circumstances, to nearly 20 million veterans. With the average age of veterans now at 62 and increasing, the cost of chronic care for illnesses incurred long after military service is about to explode.

Earlier this month the VA came under fire for allegedly spending $2 million to move one of its top officials into an office with an unobstructed view of the White House. The VA denied the charge, insisting that the move cost only $386,000. There have been countless other tales of waste and bureaucrat fat. Any government bureaucracy—or non-government bureaucracy, for that matter—is likely to produce tales of this sort from time to time. But the impressionistic evidence is that the VA, loaded with "double-dipping" retired military personnel, produces more than its share of them.

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More serious than "nickel and dime" scandals is the waste in the centerpiece programs that absorb the greatest part of the VA's energy and budget. Every year three percent of the 370,000 veterans with VA-guaranteed mortgages default, sticking the government with thousands of homes it must unload at significant losses. A much bigger problem afflicts the VA's huge health care system. VA hospitals service seven percent of all patients nationwide on an average day, and absorb $10 billion of the agency's annual budget. But they're creaking from mismanagement.

The head of the National Association of VA Physicians, Dr. Paul Schafer, warned Congress last April that the system "may literally self-destruct under the weight of its own managerial and administrative burden, which has already grown to obscene proportions." The *Los Angeles Times* reports that cardiac surgery units at four VA medical centers were closed in the last two years for unacceptable performance. The General Accounting Office has raised questions about the quality of patient care in VA hospitals. But the big question is: Why should the government be financing a huge independent health care network, parallel to the general system of public and private hospitals, rather than simply paying for the care of deserving veterans in America's regular health care system? This would be cheaper, and the care would probably be better as well.

But a smaller veterans bureaucracy is not the likely result of creating a new Department of Veterans Affairs. Quite the opposite, in fact. VA administrator Thomas K. Turnage says disingenuously, "We don't see that the change would have one iota of impact at all." That's why he's for it, you understand: because it wouldn't change anything. OK, let's take the administrator at his word. Don't our leaders have more pressing matters to attend to than something that would not have one iota of impact? □

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	RUNNING ON EMPTY	*	25
2.	MOSCOW PLIGHTS	1	10
3.	THE THIRD MAN	*	2
4.	STREET TALK	*	2
5.	DER WEG ZURÜCK	—	1
6.	PARTY GIRL	—	1
7.	ORDER, PLEASE	—	1
8.	CRY THE BELOVED CINEMA	*	3
9.	THE RISING SUM	*	3
10.	THE HIT PARADE	—	1

1988. What are you snickering at? Hart's revival of his wrecked campaign may help all the Democrats because it creates a lively scenario in which they can perform (ZC, December 21). He needn't last; his re-entry offers conflict and contrast for the others to exploit. It resurrects the dead Democratic story.

Post-summit. This summit is being judged the way the budget talks were judged: success is the absence of failure. They signed INF, which was ceremonial, and Reagan (whew) didn't give away the store. As for whether Gorbo charmed us to death, that, as a press angle, is media chutzpah of the year. So who said what on SDI? Did Gorbo deflect the human rights issue? What's the story on the Nicaraguan arms buildup? Cut to Van Cliburn.

Judge Kennedy. Senators may have been going through the motions on Kennedy, but the characterization that they're "exhausted" from the Bork battle is bizarre. What Bork strained wasn't stamina or patience or intellect; it was the Senate's delicate structure of deals and relationships. Bork forced the Senate to deal directly with disruptive issues. Kennedy's lack of an agenda allows them their usual out.

Homelessness '87. Sensitivity to the homeless is so raised that it has become a useless cliché. In fact, the whole thing is a seasonal fiction. There is no social empathy because this group has not been individualized; they remain the faceless Homeless. The stories about dinners, etc., are an emotional trough; good deeds done on our behalf.

Waldheim now. History is closing in on Kurt Waldheim. His pariah status is unrelieved, and his own commission reportedly will intensify the case against him. The real story lies in the Austrian public's struggle with history. Many stand by Waldheim because his soldierly guilt becomes their own. But this is an old tale. The personal application of historical judgments is a bitter process.

Raisa. The most interesting twist in the U.S.-U.S.S.R. psychodrama is Raisa's emergence as a bogeyperson. Traditional U.S. dislike of the Soviets, briefly displaced, settled on her like a hod of bricks. Maybe Mrs. G really is a socially upstaging, overdressing, Leninist-lecturing arriviste with a mickey mouse degree. But why is that such a big story?

Chaos. The scrutiny of apparent chaos has become a hot pursuit, thanks largely to a best seller on the topic and a *New York Times* piece on chaos and the market. The underlying idea—seemingly random phenomena actually reflect a greater order—is not new, but the objection that such perceived order is imposed subjectively is yielding to computer evidence. This is philosophy become science.

South Africa. The release of Govan Mbeki was hyped by South Africa, which even hinted at a Mandela release. Now Mbeki is banned, and hope for Mandela is gone. Why? You can take Botha's statements at face value, or you can take into account *Cry Freedom*. Mbeki was released just as the anti-apartheid film opened, a p.r. gesture to mute U.S. reaction. Now that *Cry Freedom* has flopped, South Africa's back to business as usual.

Japanese potlatch. First Van Gogh. Now Dave Righetti, who's been offered $20 million to play Japanese baseball. Japan has so much money that it's turning into a nation-state version of Charles Foster Kane, collecting cultural artifacts for the sake of collecting. More interesting is the role of U.S. culture in all this; it's entering a period where, for the first time, it's being plundered.

Dear Mr. Jesus. Child abuse has sunk quickly to the cultural bottom. The most requested record in many markets has been "Dear Mr. Jesus," a tearjerker in which a little girl prays for beaten kids, including herself. This is the second child abuse hit this year, with a third, less kitschy song getting college station play. Altogether the most dispiriting development in hit-making since payola.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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NOTEBOOK

□ MORE MONKEY BUSINESS: People are accusing Gary Hart of re-entering the presidential race in order to collect the million dollars of federal matching funds he lost by dropping out seven months ago. We hope that's true, because it's the only respectable reason we can think of. It was pointlessly cruel of the Federal Election Commission to deny Hart money he had legitimately qualified for and borrowed against. But Gary Hart is too big a man to worry about leaving creditors stranded. More likely his motive was some combination of a towering ego and the prospect of an empty life now that its only purpose had been snuffed out. One motive we can dismiss out of hand is the one Hart actually gave: the need to promote his vision of America. After five years of this stuff who, besides Hart, can say what that vision is, other than the idea of "new ideas" itself? Who, besides Hart, felt a moral or intellectual vacuum when he dropped out of the race? More to the point who, besides Hart and the Republicans—the real beneficiaries of his decision—feels uplifted by his return?

□ PANDERING SEASON: Israel is never more loved by American politicians—and the PLO is never more despised—than in the year before a presidential election. As friends of Israel, we at this journal would prefer more constancy of devotion to these extravagant and often fleeting displays of passion. For a while during the 1984 election campaign, the hottest competition between the contenders was over who more fervently wanted the U.S. Embassy moved to Jerusalem. Last time we checked, the embassy was still in Tel Aviv. This year's proof of devotion is especially fatuous. It concerns a campaign to close down the PLO's Washington office, a campaign now expanded to cover the organization's New York office as well. Presidential candidates Bob Dole, Jack Kemp, Paul Simon, and George Bush (who is attempting to lead the charge) have signed on to the cause, along with a raft of mere senators and representatives. The question of the Washington office is arguable. A terrorist organization certainly has no right to official representational status in the nation's capital, although it seems the State Department only gave the PLO office that status in order to be able to shut it down. Support for shutting down the PLO's office at the United Nations in New York is a matter of sheer sycophancy to some Jewish groups, themselves badly misguided. For our part, we wouldn't mind if the U.N. would remove itself from New York to Ouagadougou, taking with it the entire gasbag Philharmonic of which the PLO is only one player. But if the U.N. is to stay in New York, it's got to be allowed to accredit whomever it wants. On the larger civil liberties question, the constitutional freedom of speech applies to citizens and aliens alike—and, more important, to wisdom and error alike. That includes the PLO. True friends of Israel wouldn't want it any other way.

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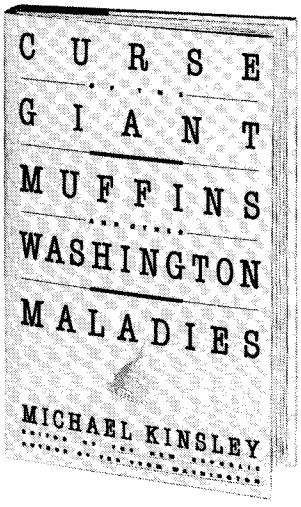
—John Kenneth Galbraith,
The Washington Post Book World



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□ WEATHER REPORT:

A warming trend seen between Nancy, Raisa

—*Boston Globe*, December 10

Frost in the White House for 2 First Ladies

—*New York Times*, same day

(thanks to Allison Stanger, Cambridge, Massachusetts)

□ TELL IT TO MATHIAS RUST: "If two commandos in a hang glider were able to cross a border boasting the world's tightest security measures, without being interrupted, then Israel is in trouble." —Moscow Radio, November 27

(thanks to John Hannah, Washington, D.C.)

□ HO HO HO:

Christmas Sales Said To Be Brisk

—*New York Times*, December 10

Retail Sales Figures Show Signs of Further Softening

—*Wall Street Journal*, same day

□ ET TU? Senator Joseph R. Biden took time away from hearings on the confirmation of Judge Kennedy to address a group of reporters and well-wishers in Manchester, New Hampshire, last night. The Delaware Democrat, appearing with his family at his side, braved brisk winds to make a stunning announcement. "First of all, let me say how happy Lee and I are to be back in the state of New Hampshire," Biden began. Later he said: "Getting back in the race is about the toughest thing I have ever done. And believe me, it is not done lightly. My family, Lee, John, and Andrea, understand clearly the difficulties that lie ahead. . . . We are together on this decision, because we love this country and because we are not quitters. . . . Let's let the people decide. I'm back in the race." The balding senator paused, then added: "By the way, did I ever tell you the one about my ancestors in the coal mines?"

□ PEACE ON EARTH: TNR will not publish next week. The editors are using the time to begin the process of destroying their intermediate-range nuclear weapons.

THE PRESS

LIKE A VIRGIN

FORGET IRANAMOK, insider trading, the sleaze of Ed Meese, and the trial of Mike Deaver. The hot topic in the world of investigative reporting today is Jessica Hahn. The brightest minds in American journalism are at work on the question: Was Hahn, as she claims, a virgin before she was drugged and brutally raped in a Florida hotel room seven years ago by TV evangelist Jim Bakker? Or was Bakker telling the truth when he asserted that Jessica was no sexual ingenue but instead a practiced seductress who lured him into her adulterous embrace using "every trick of the trade"?

Although this controversy may lack a certain gravitas, it has taken the media by storm. The *Miami Herald* stakeout of Gary Hart and Donna Rice looks like a Sunday school picnic next to the voyeuristic craving for news about Jessica's sex life that has infected some of the more solemn temples of journalism. In New York the story has provided weeks of teasing headlines and photos not only for the predictably déclassé *Post* and *Daily News* but also for tony *Newsday*, which on one recent afternoon ran no less than three different Jessica items (two columns and one news item). Not to be outdone in invasions of privacy, the *Washington Post*'s Style section scooped the nation and the world on September 30 with startling evidence that Jessica might be less of an innocent victim than she claims to be.

But even in the Year of the Bimbo, there are certain limits beyond which the mainstream press will not go. With the question of Jessica's veracity now turning on the (sometimes gross) minutiae of what she really did with Bakker and other alleged lovers, the really tough legwork on the story has been taken up by those distinguished chronicles of American taste and culture, *Playboy* and *Penthouse*. Never polite rivals, these two journals have joined in a Fleet Street-style tournament of insult and abuse, in which each side is trying to destroy the other's credibility (and newsstand sales) by puncturing holes in the other's revelations about Jessica's erogenous escapades.

Recently, sleuths from the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* have been enlisted by the skin mags to assist in their pursuit of the real Jessica. In addition to providing the kind of investigative muscle needed to deconstruct such an elusive target, these hired guns offer reassuring proof that *Playboy* and *Penthouse* really do publish the most prestigious bylines in American literature.

SYMPATHY for the quarry in this foxhunt is not entirely in order, since Hahn promiscuously courted the skin-mags' attention. First, according to an account she gave to *Playboy*, Jessica phoned *Penthouse* publisher Bob Guccione after being impressed by his earnest television manner. Guccione informed her he was "hungry" for her story. He indicated he was anxious to use her confession to "get" TV evangelists like Bakker and Jerry Falwell. (Both *Playboy* and *Penthouse* have had it in for TV evangelists since last year. They blame Bakker and Company for Ed Meese's anti-porn commission, whose ruminations provoked 7-11 and other national retail chains to remove the magazines from their shelves.)

Hahn eventually broke off negotiations with Guccione. Depending upon whom you believe, the cause of this rupture was either that she wanted more than the $350,000 he was offering (Guccione's story) or that she didn't want to do some of the things the *Penthouse* publisher wanted her to

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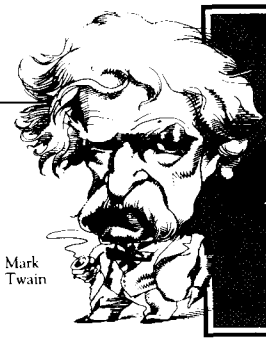

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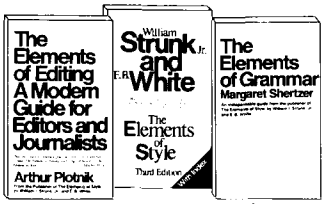
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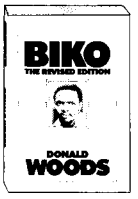

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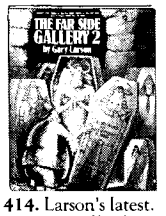

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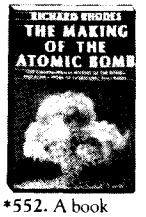

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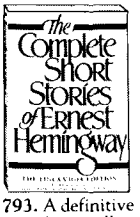

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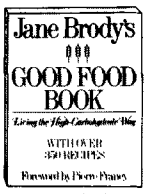

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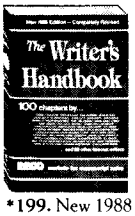

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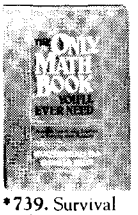

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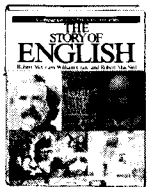

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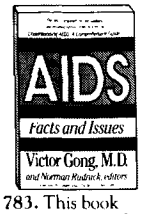

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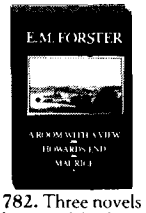

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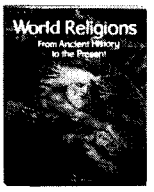

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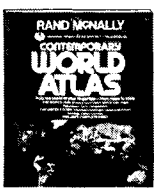

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do, such as wearing a tape recorder to try to trap Falwell and Bakker into making incriminating remarks (Hahn's story). In any event, Jessica found the alternative, aging *Playboy* rabbit-king Hugh Hefner, more attractive. She eventually signed a reputed million-dollar contract in which she agreed to bare not only her soul but also her upper torso in *Playboy*'s glossy pages.

Even before *Playboy* could rush Hahn's story onto the newsstands, *Penthouse* tried to spoil the scoop by printing a detailed account of her encounter with Bakker that was based on a transcript of a tape recording Jessica made while trying to squeeze "hush money" out of Bakker's PTL (for People That Love) organization. Still, when it finally got its two-part interview with Jessica into print, *Playboy* gave Hahn an unprecedented opportunity to describe the kinky melodrama of her ordeal. The riveting details included a sample of Jim's pillow talk: "When you help the shepherd, you're helping the sheep," he gasped as she tried to fight him off. Then there was his justification for his compulsive infidelity: "Tammy Faye is too big and cannot satisfy me." Hahn was emphatic that Jim Bakker had really said these things: "I would stand in a court of law to prove that this is the truth. . . . I'm telling you, he said that. Hook me up to a machine."

DO YOU believe her? Robert Scheer, the ace *Los Angeles Times* inquisitor hired by *Playboy* to help conduct its interviews, says he found Hahn's story convincing, although he adds, "It wasn't supposed to be an investigative piece." He admits to being fooled by Ronald Reagan, so why not by Hahn. Art Harris, a star *Washington Post* writer who learned his technique at the knee of Bob Woodward, also found Hahn persuasive when he first talked to her. Harris and *Post* colleague Michael Isikoff had plunged with gusto into the seamier aspects of the PTL story last spring when they went prowling topless bars in North Carolina looking for other Bakker mistresses.

Harris, who last summer wrote the *Penthouse* story on Hahn that scooped *Playboy*'s interview, says he began to entertain doubts about her veracity after receiving anonymous phone calls. The message was that the citizens of Massapequa, Jessica's hometown on Long Island, were irate that she was passing herself off as something she was not, namely the virginal prey of a manipulative masher. With diligence, Harris tracked down Evelyn Riccobono, a former secretary at the evangelical temple where Hahn claims to have been first lured into the religious netherworld populated by Bakker and his cohort. Evelyn in turn led Harris to her ex-husband, Rocco Riccobono, who confirmed that he had indulged in a sporadic affair with Hahn beginning in 1978, two years before she claims to have been deflowered by Bakker. The intrepid Harris even located Joanne Posner, a former friend of Hahn's who claims to have witnessed at least one compromising encounter between Rocco and Jessica. Further research disclosed that much of Massapequa remembered Hahn as a snot-nosed gospel groupie who bragged about surrendering her virginity at age 17 to John Wesley Fletcher, a minor league preacher who later introduced her to Bakker.

The *Washington Post*, apparently finding these revelations more compelling than Bob Woodward's account of his bedside conversation with William Casey, published them with alacrity, although *Post* editors drew a veil over some of the more salacious details. This left the way clear for Harris to publish a more explicit account in *Penthouse*. And in the January issue his piece was published as a sidebar to an even more lurid Hahn exposé in which a self-confessed "madam" named Roxanne claimed that Jessica had been a part-time employee of her disorderly house in 1977 and '78.

Although he now appears somewhat uncomfortable about *Penthouse*'s promotion of Roxanne, which he had nothing to do with, Harris defends prying into Jessica's bedroom. He suggests that by claiming that Bakker took her virginity, Hahn may be perpetrating an even bigger media hoax than Clifford Irving's fake biography of Howard Hughes. The question of whether Jessica is a liar or not could gravely affect the course of federal investigations into malfeasance at PTL, Harris maintains: "Now that investigators are piecing through the wreckage, her credibility is crucial. The question of her virginity may appear frivolous and beneath the calling of an investigative reporter, but it's at the heart of her credibility."

For its part *Playboy*, the victim of this Janet Cooke scenario, if that's what it is, is maintaining an awkward silence. A spokesman for the magazine said comment would be inappropriate in view of the "possibility of litigation." But so far no lawsuits have been filed. Meanwhile, between doctor's appointments for plastic surgery on her lips, nose, cheeks, and breasts, Hahn managed to telephone a talk show host to denounce her accusers as Liars and Nobodies. Hahn has taken up residence at the Playboy Mansion in Los Angeles. Neither she nor her pursuers seem concerned that the search for the real Jessica Hahn is shifting from the gutter to the sewer.

MARK HOSENBALL

Mark Hosenball is a reporter in the Washington bureau of the London *Sunday Times*.

Israel's dovish top brass.

GREAT KHAKI HOPE

PRIME MINISTER Yitzhak Shamir was preaching to the converted when he spoke in the West Bank settlement of Ariel to the Central Committee of his Herut Party, the dominant faction in the right-wing Likud alliance. It was a mild Sunday afternoon, early this fall, a week after the Shamir government decided to forgo the Lavi fighter-plan project. Although it was his government that made this major decision (primarily because Labor ministers op-

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posing the project outvoted their Likud colleagues), Shamir used the days following to attack it and its supporters. But now he has also lashed out at an unlikely target: the Israel Defense Forces, IDF, a revered institution in an Israel that does not have too many idols left, or right.

The IDF General Staff was forcefully and almost unanimously against the Lavi. As the intended user of this weapon system, it would have no use for it, as there is no free launch and the IDF has been acutely short of operation, training, and maintenance funds. The generals said it in so many words to Yitzhak Rabin, to the Cabinet, and—briefing reporters with Rabin's approval—to the public.

SHAMIR'S anti-military barrage at Ariel was curious in more ways than one. The ostensible charge was that the Lavi debate had become political, and therefore the IDF should have kept quiet and let its civilian masters work out their arguments without any military intrusion. But it did not make sense for him to dwell on the Lavi when the deed was done. It was also politically risky to identify the IDF with Labor, for rather than discrediting Likud's rivals it might have the effect of conferring on them some of the IDF's moral authority. There had to be another answer, for which one did not have to look too far at Ariel. There it was: the West Bank, Israel's continental divide, its political valley of the shadow of death, with the Likud knowing deep down that the IDF stands on the wrong side. The Lavi was only a metaphor: Shamir was in essence launching a pre-emptive strike, aimed at neutralizing the military in the coming national debate over a possible negotiated territorial compromise.

Once, or rather, if negotiations with Jordan and the Palestinians reach the stage where specifics are put before Knesset and public, military professionals might help tip the scales at least among the great middle, the undecideds, who are neither for retaining all of Eretz Israel for religious and ideological reasons nor in favor of immediate total withdrawal and letting the chips fall where they may, including into the PLO's lap. The General Staff will never be asked by the Cabinet whether to withdraw, or to what topographical line. But it will inevitably take part in the governmental staff work, spelling out the military consequences under the various options being weighed.

It is highly unlikely that when asked for advice, though not consent, the military will do Likud's bidding and pronounce any withdrawal from territory between the Jordan river and the pre-1967 armistice lines an unacceptable military risk. To the contrary, it is a safe bet that if the current generation is still running the IDF when the diplomatic deadlock is broken, they will subscribe to some modified version of the military annex to the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. The Sinai model will not be copied on the West Bank. Israeli withdrawal is to be less than total, and demilitarized zones are also to be established across the river, on Jordan's East Bank, to forestall the real threat to Israel's delicate middle: Arab (which is to say Iraqi) armor divisions. But no senior general will resign his commission. No one will denounce the negotiated plan in the "high treason" to "mortal danger" polemical currency of the right-wing. Whether they choose to make their views known or not, the fact remains that the uniformed leadership of the IDF is indeed more "dovish" than right-wing politicians would like it to be.

There is no inherent contradiction between the militancy of those generals who demanded in 1967 a pre-emptive strike against Nasser and the prudence that leads their successors to support a land-for-peace formula on the West Bank. The General Staff of the Six-Day War had no illusions about Israel's ability to impose peace. The war's aim was limited to the Egyptian front, well short of the Suez Canal and with no intention of spreading to other fronts or liberating Jerusalem's Temple Mount and points east. And it is quite telling that most of the 1967 generals retired into politics within the center-left Labor Party or even on its left fringe. The cases of Ezer Weizmann and Ariel Sharon were the exceptions—and even they seem to prove the rule, as Weizmann drifted from Likud campaign manager to Peace Now's favorite Labor politician, and Sharon, an opportunist rather than an ideologue, flirted with the left, speaking of his willingness to negotiate with Yasir Arafat, before rejoining Likud. Labor is no longer the Mapai Party of the pioneering era. But to the Officer Corps it still appears a more authentic keeper of the old Israeli ethos of high public ideals.

THE PERSON bearing the brunt of Shamir's attack is Israel's highest-ranking soldier, Dan Shomron. As chief of staff, he is solely responsible for presenting the position of the IDF and, unlike the U.S. chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, outranks all other generals, being the only serving lieutenant general of his day. (Because of the basic law regulating civilian-military relations after the Yom Kippur war, he can also have more Cabinet-level influence than the minister of defense.) At 49, the oldest incoming IDF chief to date, Shomron is the first to be born on a kibbutz—in his case, Ashdot Yaakov, in the Jordan Valley, where his parents still live. Shomron left the kibbutz almost 20 years ago and now lives in suburban Tel Aviv. For purposes of sociopolitical classification, however, the kibbutz label still applies to him. It is no more than a rule of thumb, but most of the kibbutz electorate tend to vote for Labor or its more leftist satellites. Shomron's military hero is also a kibbutznik, the late Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, PALMACH commander and arguably Israel's best field general in its do-or-die 1948 war. The semi-independent PALMACH, short for Shock Troops, was socialist in domestic orientation but what would now be called "Greater Israel" on territorial matters. Boiled down to its essentials, Shomron's position is Allon's, as well as that of Allon's former lieutenant, Rabin: that Israel cannot realistically hope to impose political terms—peace—on its Arab adversaries. It should therefore adopt a defensive strategy offensively executed, in order to deter or put off war and minimize its cost in Israeli casualties and resources. He also emphasizes Israel's conventional posture over its nuclear buildup. On this latter point, he is backed up by two of the

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most important officers—Deputy Chief Ehud Barak and Air Force Commanding Gen. Avihu Bin-Nun.

BY INTERNATIONAL LAW, the IDF—rather than its civilian superiors—is the occupying power in the territories. So far that's worked well for the right-wingers. When Rabin took over from Likud's Moshe Arens, he kept on the hard-line coordinator, a former Military Intelligence and Mossad operator, Shmuel Goren. The Levy-Goren alliance (Moshe Levy was Shomron's predecessor) translated Rabin's policy into harsh terms, perfectly acceptable to Shamir and his chief national security confidant, Arens. But this started to change in the spring of 1985, when Ephraim Sneh was appointed civilian administrator of the Judea and Samaria area. Sneh is the scion of a revered and tragic name in Israeli politics. His late father, Moshe Sneh, was a powerful orator and organizer who rose meteorically to the top of pre-independence Israel, becoming Haganah's civilian chief and considered prime-ministerial timber. But he sacrificed his career by moving from the Liberal right to the left and finally to the out-of-bounds Communist Party. Sneh's only son, Ephraim, was one of the first in the Israeli military system (as a liaison officer with Israeli-backed militias in South Lebanon) to alert his superiors to the Shiite factor. A couple of years later Rabin decided to utilize his talents in the West Bank. Levy and Goren opposed the appointment, rightly fearing that Sneh would be too independent and energetic in his efforts to strive for accommodation with Hashemites and moderate Palestinians (read: moderate, non-terrorist PLO supporters) alike. This was one of a handful of appointments on which Rabin was willing to overrule Levy's objections. Promoted to brigadier general, Sneh went on to establish an excellent reputation and connections on both banks and in then-Prime Minister Peres's immediate circle.

Sneh's immediate superior on the military side has been General Barak, conceded by admirers and detractors alike to be perhaps the most intellectually brilliant general around, with an unsurpassed record of personal bravery to (his red paratrooper) boot. Also kibbutz-born, with views similar to Shomron's and for years his protégé, Barak backed up Sneh, somewhat shielding him from their common hostile superior, Levy. When Barak was appointed last summer deputy chief of the general staff, senior to all other major generals, his successor at Central Command was Amram Mitzna, also kibbutz-born and currently a resident (but not a member) of another kibbutz, a conscientious officer with a record of putting his career on the line for a cause, such as challenging Sharon following the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Mitzna teamed up well with Sneh and personally clashed with settlers after he termed a certain provocation on their part "a vile act."

Mitzna's ability and temperament are not exceptional among the new army. Despite the unrealistic and debilitating tasks assigned to it under the trio of right-wing politicians, Begin, Sharon, and Arens, and their eager army compatriots, Rafael Eitan and Levy, there survives a fine group of Sabrass, as the Sabra brass might be called, to lead the IDF out of its doldrums. Some of them, including Northern Command's Yossi Peled and logistics chief Menachem Einan, have that kibbutz background; others were classmates in Israel's "Junior West Point"—a Haifa Military Prep for 16- to 18-year-olds—in the early '60s. To the latter group belong Director of Military Intelligence Amnon Lipkin, Personnel Chief Matan Vilnay, and Barak's deputy, possibly next in line for air force chief, Giroa Rom. (Mitzna graduated a year later; all are about 43 years old). The air force's Bin-nun and promising ground forces Gens. Uri Sagi and Doron Rubin also come from working-class backgrounds and are considered relatively moderate in their political outlook. These company commanders of 1967, battalion commanders in the 1970 War of Attrition and in 1973 (only Shomron was senior enough to lead a Brigade), and junior generals in Lebanon—they are solid rather than colorful, professionals rather than vainglorious warriors, practical men mindful of the limits to Israel's power, not the least of which is the need for a wide consensus in any future wars, a consensus that was strained even among soldiers during the Lebanese episode. This means that they are guided by concern for the values and lives of their own soon-to-be-inducted sons, not by the urge to control more of the land of their forefathers . . . which happens now to be land on which Arabs live.

Shomron's General Staff is probably the best the IDF has had since Rabin's in 1967. While one does not know their precise positions on social policy and economics, or any other domestic dispute, they can be expected to apply their main lesson—the limits of Israel's power—to the topics and priorities of the day. Ironically, though, these peace-mongering (though hardly pacifist or even "Peace Now") men, beholden to a strong, sensible, sane Israel, could probably enter Israeli politics at center stage only following a crisis situation, such as another war from which a Shomron or Barak might emerge as the victorious chief of staff, wooed and anointed by Labor and ready to do battle with an aging Sharon on the other side.

AMIR OREN

Amir Oren is a columnist and chief editorial writer for the Israeli daily *Davar*.

Adding up the score.

THE SUMMIT: WHO WON?

FOR BETTER AND WORSE, a lot less happened at the Washington summit than might have. For better, President Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev did not pick up where they left off at Reykjavik and agree to do away with all nuclear weapons. Also for better, President Reagan deftly brushed aside a Gorbachev suggestion that the

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two superpowers negotiate directly to reduce conventional forces in Europe and consult their allies afterward. "That's not how we treat our allies," Reagan is said to have replied.

For worse, contrary to what President Reagan told the nation on television afterward, nuclear arms control dominated the summit and nothing seems to have been accomplished to ease regional conflicts or improve human rights in the Soviet Union beyond securing the release of a few dozen dissidents, of which the Soviets have tens of thousands.

THE WASHINGTON summit probably works out to be a net negative for the United States, though not for President Reagan personally. The INF treaty got signed, which leaves the West marginally less able to deter Soviet aggression. At the same time, though, fear of complicating Senate ratification of the INF treaty probably caused Gorbachev to avoid unseemly efforts to kill off Star Wars, denuclearize Europe, or revisit Reykjavik. Some modest progress was made toward a START treaty, especially an agreement to apply intrusive INF verification principles to strategic weaponry. But the scheduling of a Moscow summit for next year, linked to a START signing, creates pressures on the outgoing Reagan administration to make concessions or agree to a "framework" deal that Congress will enforce in the United States but that will not bind the Soviets at all.

On the level of public relations—that is, psychological warfare—the Soviets achieved a huge victory. President Reagan came out with improved personal popularity, but he has no program to push and won't be in power much longer anyway. Gorbachev, meanwhile, seems to have wowed American elites and substantially advanced his cause, described by Sovietologist Dimitri Simes as "détente, yes—but on his terms, and subsidized by the West." Despite the fact that the Soviet Union is the weaker power politically and economically, no one in Washington seems to have a strategy to induce Gorbachev to accept an American agenda. Everyone is reacting to Gorbachev's agenda.

That agenda, according to Simes and others, is to make nuclear disarmament the main measure of East-West relations, capture the moral high ground on that issue, and use it to neutralize America's deterrent and its technological superiority. That will leave in place the Soviet conventional edge and cause divisions in the Western alliance. Meanwhile, the Soviets can pursue a flexible policy elsewhere in the world—diplomatic and political where possible, otherwise military or subversive. All the evidence indicates that while Gorbachev's methods may be modern, his attitude toward East-West relations remains zero-sum.

On all regional issues that arose during the summit, for example, the best that President Reagan could get was promises. "That was our biggest disappointment," said Donald Gregg, national security adviser to Vice President George Bush. On Afghanistan, no one seriously expected Gorbachev to announce in Washington a date for Soviet withdrawal. But contrary to rumors planted by Soviet diplomats, U.S. officials say Gorbachev did not give any private assurances either that a withdrawal date is about to be set. Meanwhile, Gorbachev repeatedly tried to get Reagan to pledge a halt to U.S. aid to Afghan rebels and make this country seem equally responsible for the ongoing war, officials said. Reagan refused, though the United States has agreed in Geneva that it will stop aid once Soviet withdrawals begin.

On the Persian Gulf, U.S. officials had hoped that the Soviets, currently presiding at the U.N. Security Council, would begin work on the U.S.-backed resolution calling for sanctions against Iran for refusing a cease-fire. But not even minimal moves occurred. "Their policy is to stall and protect the Iranians from U.N. sanctions," one official said. "They want to curry favor with Iran at our expense."

On Nicaragua, Gorbachev dropped a hint that Soviet military aid might decline if peace took hold. However, post-summit revelations by defector Roger Miranda and his former boss, Nicaraguan defense minister Humberto Ortega, indicate that the Soviets actually have pledged to step up aid. On human rights in the Soviet bloc, Gorbachev again hinted at possible changes in immigration regulations, but officials say nothing concrete was forthcoming. Even though the Soviet Union signed the Helsinki Accord of 1975 guaranteeing human freedoms, Gorbachev bluntly acted during the summit as though U.S. human rights interventions were illegitimate.

THE UNITED STATES has not figured out how to get the Soviets to behave in the Third World, but ironically it has got the Soviets to comply with the American nuclear agenda—which turns out to advance Soviet interests. Zero-zero INF was America's idea and President Reagan developed one of history's great bargaining levers in SDI, but the former benefits the Soviets and the latter is likely to be disconnected without Reagan's realizing it. Meanwhile, the administration is working toward a strategic arms deal that credible experts say may actually render America less safe.

At the Washington summit, there was no resolution of the Star Wars issue. Gorbachev did not repeat his previous demands that the program be halted or that research be confined to the laboratory. He accepted language in the final communiqué that would allow research and development "as required," though he would not accept U.S. language allowing "testing in space." The communiqué also provides that when the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty expires, "each side will be free to decide its course of action." President Reagan apparently believes this wording insures that SDI will be built when ready, but his own advisers say it merely postpones a negotiating showdown with the Soviets.

Actually, outsiders who favor and oppose SDI are both increasingly convinced that the program is as good as dead in spite of Reagan's beliefs and the $3.8 billion budgeted for it. They think Congress will never permit space testing, which would violate the so-called "narrow inter-

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pretation" of the ABM Treaty. And without such testing the program can never prove itself and move toward deployment. Administration officials admit that the only thing wrong with this logic is that maybe Congress could change its mind. There seems little chance of that, although the House Armed Services Committee is looking into a possible ABM system to protect U.S. land-based missiles and command centers that would be legal under the 1972 treaty.

REAGAN AND GORBACHEV said they expect to meet in Moscow next year to sign a START treaty to reduce strategic forces by 50 percent. One White House official said, "George Shultz would give his . . . whatevers . . . for a START treaty." Top U.S. negotiators acknowledge that the chance of getting a treaty ready to sign is less than 50-50. Kenneth Adelman, just-departed chief of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, thinks it's really impossible, given the number of weapons systems involved, the difficulties in verification, and the shortness of time.

Adelman thinks all that's possible is a Vladivostok-style "framework" agreement, which would contain no verification provisions but probably would be enforced by Congress while the next administration worked out an actual treaty. Meanwhile, some other experts—including Henry Kissinger, former Defense Secretary Harold Brown, and former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft—think there's a danger that START reductions could increase the vulnerability of U.S. land-based missiles and reduce the number of invulnerable strategic missile submarines. They are recommending new emphasis on the Midgetman, the single-warhead mobile missile. But the administration is about to recommend canceling the program as too costly, at $50 billion for 500 missiles. The administration prefers a rail-mobile MX with the same number of warheads, costing about $20 billion. Midgetman advocates say the MX would be too vulnerable. The controversy proves Kissinger's oft-made point that the United States still lacks a consensus about its overall nuclear strategy.

The same criticism can be made of U.S. strategy toward Gorbachev. As Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey said in October, "To begin, we have to know what we want," and "hope is not enough." Bradley, Kissinger, and others propose that the United States concentrate first on correcting the disparity in conventional forces. Kissinger advocates a return to linkage between nuclear arms control and regional settlements. Bradley thinks Western economic help, including trade credits, ought to be tied to economic reform, military spending cuts, and human rights improvements. Their idea is to induce change in Soviet behavior, not just armament levels. President Reagan often repeats the adage that nations are not hostile because they are armed, but armed because they are hostile. In practice, he acts as though he is not listening to himself.

MORTON M. KONDRACKE

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

BORN AGAIN

AS SOON AS Mikhail Gorbachev's limo pulled away from the White House on December 10, the mood turned giddy. President Reagan and his wife, Nancy, hugged and kissed. The next day, chief of staff Howard Baker declared at the senior staff meeting that great progress had been made during the summit. Later that morning Reagan got a standing ovation from congressional leaders when he met with them in the Oval Office. This hadn't happened in years. By December 14 Reagan was so relaxed at a Cabinet meeting that he rolled his eyes when asked about Raisa Gorbachev and told a story. Seems Mrs. Gorbachev had boasted during her visit about her academic background. Her husband got high honors as a student, she said. Her honors were higher.

From a public relations standpoint, the summit was a glittering success. And that's what it was: a p.r. summit. True, the treaty banning medium-range nuclear missiles was signed, but it had been all but finalized weeks before. No significant progress was made in any area. Reagan and Gorbachev conferred one-on-one for more than two hours and chatted with aides present for another three hours. But their back-and-forth consisted of boilerplate. Gorbachev stuck to the party line. "He bored the pants off Reagan," said one official. "He was rehearsing his lines for his televised press conference. He said exactly the same things."

The talks were a sideshow. The main events were public appearances—arrival and departure ceremonies, speeches, toasts, photo opportunities, a walk along the Rose Garden. Reagan and his aides had hoped for a blip in the polls. They got an eruption. Pollster Richard Wirthlin had studied the public reaction to summits going back to the 1950s and found that, on average, presidents gained 1.5 percent in the week afterward. Last November 3, Reagan's approval rating was 49 percent in Wirthlin's survey. By November 30, with summit fever growing, it had moved up to 54 percent. On the weekend after the summit, it had jumped to 64 percent. On Sunday, December 13, it was 67 percent. This is where Reagan's popularity stood before Iranamok in November 1986.

His popularity is bound to slip when the summit halo effect wears off, but the White House hopes it dips no lower than the high 50s. Maybe it won't. Reagan's presidency has been rejuvenated. After an aimless year, it now has an agenda—a START treaty reducing strategic nuclear arsenals and Reagan's trip to Moscow in May or June. In truth, Reagan and Gorbachev aren't much closer to a START agreement than they were before the summit. But they managed to create the impression that they are, which is a measure of their success at p.r. The possibility of a new treaty and the trip give Reagan a purpose. For months, he's been irrelevant. Now he's a player again, at least temporarily.

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The most deft part of Reagan's summit performance was his playing to both Gorbachev and his own conservative supporters. Whenever he appeared with Gorbachev or spoke of him, Reagan acted as if the vibes between them couldn't be better. He tried to be a good host, even passing up a chance at his press conference on December 11 to claim he'd won this round. Reagan risked trouble with conservatives when he declared, in an interview with four columnists midway through the three-day summit, that he no longer thinks Soviet leaders want to conquer the world. Instead, they have "a desire to prove that we can live in the world together at peace."

Reagan salvaged his standing with conservatives, his political base, by his ploy on Star Wars. He had been told by aides that he needs the Soviets to agree first to full testing of components of the anti-missile defense system and then to deployment. This is exactly what the Soviets wouldn't agree to. They kept a passage allowing testing "in space" out of the joint communiqué. The best he got from the Soviets was a willingness to move ahead on START without first settling the Star Wars question. This, along with a misinterpreted comment from Gorbachev, was enough for Reagan to proclaim that Star Wars had been saved, the dispute over it "resolved."

In his December 9 session with Gorbachev, Reagan wheeled out all his big arguments on behalf of Star Wars. "Listen," he said. "You've got to understand that I don't want to leave office without moving as far as I can to protect my people against a ballistic missile attack." The doctrine of mutual assured destruction isn't sufficient, Reagan insisted. "We have the technology to protect ourselves." And it will work just as well in the case of an accidental launch or an attack by a madman. Gorbachev said nothing. But he did respond when Reagan said Star Wars would be deployed. "Go ahead and deploy it," Gorbachev said. "It probably won't work and it'll waste a lot of money, but if that's what you want to do, go ahead. Who am I to stop you?" But, he added, the Soviets will be able to cope with this, presumably by adding offensive missiles.

Gorbachev's offhand remark hardly amounted to approval of Star Wars deployment. And none of Reagan's aides took it that way. But Reagan seemed to. Two days later at a press conference with reporters from outside Washington, the president said "great progress" had been made on Star Wars. The United States can now do "whatever is needed" to develop the system. As for Soviet insistence that limits be placed on Star Wars, "that was eliminated," he said. Aides spent the next several days clarifying Reagan's statement. No, Star Wars wasn't out of the woods yet. Yes, the Soviets could raise objections later. Still, Reagan had a talking point. He hadn't made any concessions on Star Wars, which is what conservatives had feared. Of course, the Soviets hadn't demanded any. He didn't mention that.

The talks on human rights and Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf and everything else went nowhere. "They were so uninteresting," said a senior official. Reagan and Gorbachev participated in so many public events—eight hours' worth—they had to be tired. At the first one-on-one session on December 8, Reagan nicked Gorbachev on human rights. The White House strategy was to make this more than an arms control summit. The strategy failed because Gorbachev didn't budge. At one point, Reagan noted that Gorbachev wouldn't have to worry as much about emigration if he allowed religious freedom. Gorbachev was unmoved.

On Afghanistan, Reagan said he couldn't do anything until the Soviets began pulling their troops out. Gorbachev said he needed Reagan to promise first that aid to the Afghan rebels would stop. On the Persian Gulf, Reagan ran into a stonewall with his plea to impose an arms embargo on Iran. It's not time for this step, said Gorbachev. The Soviet said he and Reagan should agree on troop withdrawals from Europe, then inform their allies. Reagan said his allies liked to be consulted ahead of any agreement. And so on. Secretary of State George Shultz soon began paying more attention to the working groups of American and Soviet officials. They were more interesting.

REAGAN GOT A psychological boost from the summit. He didn't see a draft of his nationally televised speech until three hours before delivery on December 10. This was just two hours after Gorbachev departed. The draft had been prepared days before, but communications chief Thomas Griscom and speechwriter Tony Dolan had to restructure it to fit what happened at the summit—less on regional issues, more on arms control. Reagan was keyed up. "As soon as he got the first lines out, you knew he'd be OK," said a senior official. The speech, which was reasonably hard-line, did well in Wirthlin's polling. Sixty-nine percent were favorably impressed, the best for any Reagan speech in more than a year.

What does Reagan do with this newfound and perhaps short-lived popularity? "That's the $64 question," says Wirthlin. "What he's done is restore his credibility. It opens an opportunity for a very good 1988. But at this point, it's only an opportunity." The obvious place to exploit his post-summit clout is on *contra* aid. A week before the summit, support for *contra* aid was "minimal," a White House official says. Now it is growing. The Sandinistas helped by announcing plans for a 600,000-man army, and the administration is squiring a high-level defector around Capitol Hill with tales of Sandinista duplicity. Better yet, Reagan can offer a new twist on the peace-through-strength argument. Only by deploying missiles in Europe did I achieve an arms agreement. And only by backing the *contras* can we achieve peace in Central America.

The White House may be dreaming on the *contra* aid issue. Certainly Reagan was dreaming when he summed up his dealings with Gorbachev. "I find it's an entirely different relationship than I had with his predecessors," he said. The difference is between something and nothing. Reagan never laid eyes on a single one of Gorbachev's predecessors.

FRED BARNES

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From cold war to park bench for Ron and Mikhail.

THE WEEK WASHINGTON LOST ITS HEAD

BY CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

HOUSE MAJORITY WHIP Tony Coelho came out of the congressional leadership's meeting with Gorbachev impressed. Impressed not just by Gorbachev's "tremendous confidence," "total command," and "comfort level," which reminded Coelho of "the kind of leader you had during World War II, but not since." (As it happens, the Russians had Stalin.) But also by Gorbachev's obvious sincerity. "The thing I liked about him is he's ethnic," explained Coelho. "He talks with his hands. When you do that you can't hide what you feel."

It was only Wednesday of summit week and Washington had lost its mind. Marlin Fitzwater, Reagan's spokesman, and Gennady Gerasimov, Gorbachev's spokesman, were hamming it up Burns and Allen style before the assembled international press corps:

> Gennady: "When the president and general secretary left the Oval Room, I was in the way and general secretary smiled at me and the president winked at me." (Laughter.)
> Marlin: "That was me." (Laughter.)
> Gennady: "Oh, sorry, I thought it was me." (Laughter.)
> Marlin: "This guy steals my show everywhere he goes."

Reagan and Gorbachev had already announced that they had achieved "call me Ron, call me Mikhail" intimacy. The toiling masses of Washington's Connecticut Avenue, whom Gorbachev had left his limo to greet, found Gorbo so attractive they were ready to run him in the New Hampshire primary. Thomas Murphy, head of the ABC network, went them one better. He was so moved upon meeting Gorbachev that he told him, "If I were a Soviet citizen, I'd vote for you."

To be sure, Ronald Reagan had set the mood a few days before Gorbachev's arrival, certifying on national television that Gorbachev (*a*) had given up the Communist idea of world domination, (*b*) was committed to total nuclear disarmament, and (*c*) was not responsible for the war in Afghanistan. By the time Gorbachev stood in the State Dining Room at the White House informing his American hosts that "people want to live in a world in which everyone would enjoy the right to life, freedom, and happiness" no one seemed to notice the farce.

A summit is by definition an exercise in equivalence. The language, the ceremony, the structure of a summit are all founded on the principle of symmetry. Moral equivalence follows easily. But this time the moral equivalence got out of hand. After meeting with Gorbachev, Alan Cranston took to the Senate's TV press gallery to give a detailed account of what Gorbachev had told congressional leaders. In total deadpan, Cranston quoted Gorbachev: "Secretary Dobrynin is now chairman of the foreign relations committee of our Supreme Soviet. They will be handling the ratification of the [INF] treaty." Not a smile, not even a raised eyebrow creased the face of the faithful rapporteur forced to repeat this droll pretension to American-style constitutionalism.

You have your conservatives, we have our conservatives, Gorbachev told the American congressional delegation. "We need to engage in new thinking ourselves," offered Cranston. Everyone—Reagan, Gorbachev, congressmen, media—seemed determined not to let the admitted "differences in our systems, our ideologies, and our societies" get in the way of peace and friendship among peoples. The word "differences" was used as if what divides the United States from the U.S.S.R. is some kind of lifestyle choice (and as if on the Soviet side there is any choice at all). There, dissidents get a stretch in a psychiatric prison; here they are sentenced to write for an "underground" alternative weekly. Take your pick.

For Reagan, moral equivalence is a form of politeness. A good host defers to his guest by denying the moral difference between them. For Gorbachev, moral equivalence is a program. Georgi Arbatov explained it perfectly. It is the way—Gorbachev's "secret weapon"—to "deprive America of The Enemy." And without The Enemy America's military industrial complex grinds to a halt. All week long that was Gorbachev's theme: We are not enemies. We are brother earthlings facing, together, the real enemies: disease, pollution, ignorance, and, above all, nuclear weapons.

Why, to even consider which side might have come out better on INF is old thinking. It was not a victory of one side over the other, but a "victory for common sense." Zero option, not zero-sum games. It is us, together, against the scourges of the world. Gorbachev summed it up in his speech at the State Department luncheon: "Civilization has approached a dividing line, not so much between different systems and ideologies but between common sense and mankind's feelings of self-preservation on the one hand, and irresponsibility, national selfishness, prejudice—to put it briefly, old thinking—on the other."

Call it park bench geopolitics: Reagan and Gorbachev sitting together looking out at the world. They are besieged. Their only hope is collaboration. Reagan had announced his receptivity to this idea at a previous summit when he suggested to Gorbachev that they both would set aside their differences rather quickly in the event of an invasion from outer space. Gorbachev overlooked Reagan's zany formulation and set about to exploit the sentiment behind this notion of superpower solidarity. Park bench geopolitics goes much further than peaceful coexistence. It implies

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that the competition is over, that, once again as in World War II, we are allies against larger forces. It follows that the cold war is over.

What need, then, for nuclear weapons? Hence, the second theme of summit week and a source of an even grimmer lunacy: the Abolition. From the minute Gorbachev touched down at Andrews that became the declared summit agenda. In his opening remarks, in Gerasimov's opening briefing, and in every subsequent interview the themes were: (1) this is an arms control summit, everything else is peripheral; (2) the test of this summit is whether enough progress is made on START to justify a Moscow summit; and (3) the ultimate aim is the total denuclearization of the world. The Soviet Embassy issued a press release on Day One outlining the Gorbachev program for total nuclear disarmament by the year 2000. It was an old blueprint, first issued in January 1986, but its release was meant to move things along.

The American side, which normally resists the idea of arms control summits, hardly had to be pushed on this score. Reagan immediately accepted the idea that progress on START would be the benchmark of success on this summit, thus creating for himself an expectation and a deadline. But Reagan didn't seem to mind, since he declared himself as keen for the Abolition as Gorbachev. Thus the INF treaty, already absurdly hyped for "eliminating a whole class of nuclear weapons" (a class that hardly existed 15 years ago and that today constitutes a full four percent of the world's nuclear arsenals), took on even more grandiose proportions as the first step on the road to a nuclear-free world.

Only five years ago, it was Jonathan Schell selling nuclear utopianism. Gorbachev picked it up and codified it in his January 1986 plan. Reagan introduced a technological version of the Abolition in 1983: the Strategic Defense Initiative, which would render nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete." But he did not sign on to arms control as a route to total disarmament until Reykjavik.

At the time, the doings at Reykjavik could be explained away as a product of the pressured atmosphere at a Hofdi House on a volcanic island where the leaders, separated from key advisers and divorced from reality, negotiated the absurd before finally being jerked away at the last minute. What was so stunning about the Washington summit was that Gorbachev and Reagan shook hands, exchanged greetings, and then retired to the Oval Office to pick up precisely where they left off at Reykjavik.

IT WAS NOT the fawning over Gorbachev's style and smile that made last week so appalling. America has long rewarded novelty and media presence with attention and admiration. Gorbachev sported a wife and a three-piece suit. Good reviews from the TV critics (Tom Shales: "You might not trust him, but you couldn't help but like him") were to be expected and discounted.

What was so appalling about the high that swept Washington during summit week was its celebration of moral equivalence and its homage to the Abolition. Appalling, because of what it said about the seriousness and capacity for memory of American politics. The official line on the Soviets, as presented by the most right-wing administration in 50 years, shifted within a week from that of enemy to collaborator. What exactly had changed in a week? The White House seemed to forget how détente ended and the new cold war started. Afghanistan, Poland, KAL, anyone?

It is permitted to change your mind in politics. But you should at least give a reason. Reagan's reasons for his new view of Russia were ignorant and pathetic: Gorbachev is different from his predecessors because he does not seek expansion, because he is uniquely committed to disarmament, and (implicitly) because he gets on with Reagan. The president's excuse for losing his head is that it was never weighted down with too many ideas to begin with. Lightness is an extenuation of sorts. He has always been subject to powerful (and therefore potentially dangerous) simple notions, and now he's come up with a new one. But what about Paul Nitze and Howard Baker and George Shultz? What were they thinking and doing last week as the world turned and the Reagan-fed euphoria grew?

The good news is that the euphoria won't last. The bad news is that it left behind a residue. The euphoria began dissipating with Gorbachev's rambling final press conference and its flashes of anti-media meanness, always a mistake for any politician. But the residual effect on American perception of the Soviet threat, which is the foundation of postwar American foreign policy, will long be felt.

Over the last decade a new realism about Soviet intentions has developed. It did not begin with the Reagan administration. It began with Jimmy Carter and the invasion of Afghanistan. (It might even be said that it began with Brezhnev and Soviet overreaching: in 1979 alone, their clients took power in Nicaragua, Cambodia, and Grenada, and they took Afghanistan themselves.) Carter's conversion was not bogus. His foreign policy after Afghanistan—Olympic boycott, grain embargo, harder line on El Salvador, projected increases in defense spending—was a significant departure.

Reagan did not invent the new realism about the Soviets. He rode it into office and then for seven years carefully nurtured it—with toughness at the negotiating table (to the point of braving a Soviet walkout on INF), a big defense buildup, and rhetorical boldness. He was not afraid to address the evil empire properly. Now it seems that Reagan too has overcome his "inordinate fear of communism" and in the course of a week seriously weakened the new consensus about Soviet intentions that had been building for a decade.

The only people who seemed to keep their heads in all this were the Soviet delegation. The Soviets know what a summit is for and they remember what the cold war is about. During summits they do their best to disguise this understanding, but occasionally it slips out. Dan Rather asked Arbatov whether the INF treaty might not ultimately lead to Western Europe being Finlandized. Finland? replied Arbatov. What's wrong with Finland? They have it pretty good.

Or as Gorbachev would put it: Finlandization is not a victory for one side or the other. It is a victory for common sense. □

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Bruce Babbitt, straight man among comedians.

STAND-UP GUY

BY HENDRIK HERTZBERG

BRUCE BABBITT figured what the hell. After a dozen debates and two-and-a-half solid years of campaigning, the distinguished former governor of Arizona was at one percent in the national polls and sinking. Obviously, sitting around talking wasn't getting him anywhere. What did he have to lose?

Richard Gephardt, all unknowing, gave him a nice opening. Gephardt concluded an attack on Paul Simon with this flourish: "Simonomics is really Reaganomics with a bow tie. And I think it's time to stand up and say to people what it is we're going to do to get this budget balanced." When it was Babbitt's turn, he said, "I've just heard a lot of flimflam from Senator Simon and from Representative Gephardt. . . . Dick Gephardt says it's time to stand up. If the president won't stand up, Congress won't stand up, these candidates won't stand up, then *I'm* gonna stand up—"

And up he stood.

"—and say, It's time to speak the truth about these issues, to say we can balance the budget only by cutting and needs-testing expenditures and entitlements and by raising taxes. Now I challenge these candidates to acknowledge the truth of that." Babbitt looked around and down; his five Democratic rivals remained rooted to their chairs. "See? I kind of expected that. There aren't a lot of profiles in courage here tonight. There really aren't."

In the stupendously unlikely event that Bruce Babbitt ends up winning the Democratic nomination for president, his December 1 stand-up homily on NBC will take its place alongside Nixon's bad shave, Reagan's microphone grab, and Mondale's where's-the-beefburger in the pantheon of TV debate inanities that changed history. What seems more likely is that it will be remembered, if it is remembered at all, as proof that television gimmickry doesn't always work.

This would be a reassuring example of the limits of shtick—if it weren't for the fact that it is precisely the cosmetology of television that has kept Babbitt's candidacy down, so far down, he jokes, the nominee "may ultimately be someone who is not now in the race, such as Cuomo, Bradley . . . or me." If the camera were kinder, Babbitt would be a stronger candidate—if not the frontrunner, then at least among the pack jostling for position. Of the six announced Democrats he has the supplest mind, the most coherent and interesting set of proposals, and the most impressive record in public office. And he's bold. To be sure, when you're dead last boldness is a kind of prudence. Even so, in embracing a fiscal program that includes both raising taxes and cutting subsidies for the better-off Babbitt has displayed what he recently referred to, in an interview with the Gannett newspapers, as *co-jones*. (He's bilingual too.)

Babbitt's awkwardness on the box is a perfectly legitimate objection to his candidacy. An ability to use television is as much a part of a modern president's box of tools as deftness in dealing with Congress or shrewdness in making appointments. Babbitt understands this. Since his disastrous performance in the Houston debate in July he has worked hard to do better—much harder than Mondale and Carter, for example, both of whom had similar problems, ever did. Babbitt has spent many, many hours looking at videotapes of himself, running and rerunning them.

If nothing else, this testifies to his willingness to suffer for the cause. What's on those tapes is not always a pretty sight. They show a man who hunches not only his body but also his face, making his chin seem more receding than it really is. His long, lugubrious face is so twitchily active it looks as though it has a team of tiny jackhammer operators just beneath the skin. The eyes blink incessantly, the tongue flicks geckolike between phrases, the mouth works. The thought occurs: Is this man about to bite the head off a live chicken? Maybe not, but when he speaks in a throaty, underwater basso or when his lips purse under a scowl, some people are reminded of Nixon. When a smile begins to lift the corners of his mouth and then is dropped like a stone, others are reminded of Carter. These are not the sort of comparisons any campaign likes to hear.

In person, Babbitt is tall, lean, and rangy. He has a shock of blond hair and a smile that, when he lets it take over his face, has an infectious charm. He's looser than he used to be, and his TV technique has begun to improve. His strengths go further in New Hampshire and especially in Iowa, where politics is conducted at the retail level and where he has a strong organization, than they do elsewhere. With a modest political success or two under his belt he would begin to look different to people. He'd seem less Nixonesque and more Lincolnesque. He'd stop reminding people of Jimmy Carter and start reminding them of Jimmy Stewart. Or so his small but dedicated retinue hopes.

Meanwhile he's running on substance—and he's got plenty of that, as I can testify after talking with him and immersing myself in a foot-high stack of speeches,

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briefing papers, position papers, reports, and articles by and about Bruce Babbitt. Although the candidate himself has not quite pulled it together in any one place, what looks suspiciously like a coherent worldview emerges from all he has said and done.

It goes something like this. The United States has emerged the victor in the great controversy that has riven the globe since the end of World War II. As economic engine and political vision, Marxism-Leninism is essentially dead. Gorbachev implicitly understands this, even if most Americans (and almost all American leaders) do not. Western notions of pluralism, political democracy, and market economics, by contrast, are alive and in the ascendancy. The proofs may be found everywhere from Seoul and Buenos Aires to Moscow and Beijing. The corollary to this success is the emergence of a global economy in which we risk getting beaten at our own game or, worse, giving up—giving up on economic renewal, giving up on the future, giving up on the promise of social justice. The task abroad is to seize the opportunities and defuse the dangers our success has presented us with—in arms control, in trade, in the world financial system. The task at home is to get control of the fiscal mess and make the economy more productive, and to do these things in ways that make our society more just and humane. All this translates into a set of proposals that tend to be almost recklessly specific.

On the fiscal front, Babbitt calls for revenue increases and outlay cuts he says would reduce the deficit by $40 billion in fiscal 1988 and by a total of $404 billion over five years. The heart of his tax plan is a value-added or sales tax of 2.5 percent the first year and five percent thereafter. He rather grandiloquently styles this a Progressive National Consumption Tax. Calling any sales tax progressive is a bit of a stretcher. Babbitt argues that his deserves the name because it would exempt necessities such as food, housing, and medicine, because it would be softened by rebates and income tax breaks for the poor, and because the rich would be unable to evade it as they do so many other taxes. The sales tax would also encourage savings, he says, thus speeding "the shift from a debtor to an investor economy."

The heart of Babbitt's plan for spending cuts is what he calls a Universal Needs Test. Every government outlay, including tax expenditures, would be subject to two questions: Is the program needed at all? And if it is, do the benefits go to people who need them? For some programs, Babbitt already knows what the answers are. He would eliminate farm subsidy payments to corporate agribusiness. He would cut the deductibility of business entertainment expenses from 80 percent to 50 percent. He would scrap the mortgage interest tax deduction for second homes and limit the deduction for first homes to $12,000 a year for single returns and $20,000 for joint returns. He would scale back and defer a variety of military spending programs and eliminate others, such as the MX missile and nuclear testing, entirely. Babbitt talks about "needs testing" rather than "means testing" partly to allay fears that he wants to tamper with the universality of Social Security and Medicare benefits. He doesn't. But he would tax those benefits fully for single people making over $25,000 a year and couples making over $32,000. (Social Security is now 50 percent taxable at these income levels.) This would affect about one-fifth of retirees—a minority, but a mi-

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nority whose members almost all vote.

Babbitt's other big idea is the "Democratic Workplace," a set of proposals for spurring productivity by promoting equity. The proposals include banning golden parachutes or restricting them to companies "that offer equivalent multiples of salary to every departing employee"; prohibiting companies from deducting executive bonuses unless workers get performance pay too; incentives to put partial ownership and control of companies in the hands of the people who work for them; and child-care vouchers.

"Managers feel valued; workers do not," Babbitt said in a July speech unveiling his idea. "American capitalism has too often regarded workers as disposable drones—as costs to be minimized—and their managers as the creators of value."

Coming from a Sunbelt moderate, that's pretty strong stuff. Babbitt was sounding nearly as fierce when I asked him about it recently. He got the bug, he said, after (successfully) mediating a bitter dispute between unions and companies in Arizona's copper industry. "I walked away shaking my head at how we've created this culture of antagonism and misunderstanding in which workers are treated as commodities and they respond by saying, 'OK, you view us as a commodity, we'll behave like a commodity: the more work rules the better, the more clock punching the better.' And management retreats into this legalistic world of relationships in which an employee drops a wrench on the shop floor and the lawyers on both sides start writing briefs for the United States Supreme Court."

BABBITT, 49 years old, comes from a rich and prominent family that settled in northern Arizona in the days of Billy the Kid and made a fortune in retail trade and ranching. He graduated from Notre Dame in 1960, went to the University of Newcastle in England on a Marshall scholarship, and was planning to become a geologist when he encountered the poverty of the Third World on a geological field trip to Bolivia in 1962. He decided on the spot that people and their problems were more interesting than rocks. He entered Harvard Law School, spending one summer in a Caracas barrio working for Acción, a Peace Corps-like volunteer agency, and another running an international student work camp in Peru. In 1965 he marched in the famous civil rights demonstrations in Selma, Alabama. After he got his law degree he worked in the federal anti-poverty program in Texas, where he met his wife, Hattie, now a successful trial lawyer. After a brief stint in the poverty program's Washington headquarters, he settled in Phoenix.

When Babbitt ran for attorney general of Arizona in 1974, he was, in his wife's words, "a tall, skinny ectomorph without any public speaking ability." He won anyway and turned the office into a kind of public interest law firm, prosecuting land fraud and corruption cases. His service as attorney general was notable for his efforts against organized crime, as a result of which he was targeted for murder by the same conspiracy that killed the investigative reporter Don Bolles in a car bombing. In March 1978 Babbitt suddenly found himself in the governor's chair when the incumbent resigned to take an ambassadorial appointment and the lieutenant governor died. He was narrowly elected that November to a term in his own right and was re-elected in 1982 with 63 percent of the vote.

What kind of a governor was he? David Osborne, a journalist who exhaustively researched the records of a half-dozen governors for a forthcoming book, *Laboratories of Democracy*, says: "Michael Dukakis is a good governor; Babbitt was a great governor." Because Arizona is about the most conservative state in the country, programmatically, Babbitt didn't do half of what Dukakis did. When the Feds created Medicaid, Arizona was the only state that refused to participate. When the Feds created the interstate highway system, Arizona said no. Babbitt brought state government into the 20th century. Osborne says, "By force of circumstance and will and political savvy, Babbitt was the first strong governor Arizona can remember. He knows how to lead."

Explaining to Tom Brokaw why he'd be good at negotiating with Gorbachev, Babbitt remarked, "I play a pretty good hand of poker." That was no idle boast. In 1985 the Arizona business community decided Phoenix needed some highways, and the Republican legislature put together a package. Babbitt, who had devoted his entire State of the State address to children, had a package of his own: more money for education, for day care and other programs, for a rise in the state's abysmally low welfare payments. Osborne takes up the story:

> A week before the legislative session ended, Babbitt said he'd veto the highway program if he didn't get what he wanted. No kids, no concrete—that was his slogan. He put the Republicans in the position of being against children if they opposed him. . . . He pushed all his chips into the middle of the table, and he won the pot. . . . It was high-stakes, high-wire leadership.

Perhaps Babbitt's most widely noted accomplishment was forging a complex agreement to protect and allocate groundwater, the main source of that arid state's drinking water. Babbitt mastered the subject and spent much of 1979 and '80 negotiating with agricultural and mining interests and representatives of the two big cities, Tucson and Phoenix. Six years later he brought the same interests to the table and forced them to accept far-reaching environmental regulations, no easy task in a state where many regard any limitation on business as a commie plot.

"The rap on Babbitt is that he's a detail person, like Jimmy Carter," Osborne says. "You see that in profile after profile, and it's just complete garbage. It comes out of his work on the water issue. He learned the details there because in any really complex negotiating situation the person who knows the most has enormous power."

Inc. magazine, in its annual report on the states, rates Arizona's economy as No. 1 in the United States. Massa-

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chusetts is No. 9. Yet Babbitt, unlike Dukakis, has not tried to sell his state's economic surge as a paradigm for the whole country. One reason, perhaps, is that the transformation of a thinly populated desert cowboy state into a thinly populated desert high-tech state has less national resonance than the rebirth of an industrial state that until recently had little to boast of except high taxes and disused dark satanic mills. The Massachusetts Miracle travels better than the Arizona Astonishment. So except for pointing to his success in getting progressive legislation through a conservative Republican legislature, Babbitt scarcely talks about his record. He talks about his ideas.

THOSE IDEAS ARE hard to categorize. Babbitt has been variously called a neoliberal, an Atari Democrat, a moderate, and a "radical centrist." Except arguably in the fiscal sense, he is certainly no conservative. Indeed, he is, so far as I know, the only Democratic candidate who actually speaks the dreaded L-word on the stump ("We must rescue the liberal tradition . . ."). He is a firm believer in activist government, though his emphasis is on government not as a planner or direct employer, but as a partner with the private sector in restructuring the economy and with the states in delivering services. He has little use for the set of ideas that go by the name of industrial policy. His instinct is to use decentralizing means to achieve national goals, as in his proposal for food stamp-like child-care vouchers. On social issues, civil liberties, and civil rights, he is about as liberal as anyone running. He is the strongest environmentalist in the race—a true conservationist who loves the wilderness as only a passionate hiker and cross-country skier can. He carries the mark of two of the quintessential experiences of 1960s idealism, volunteer work in the Third World and participation in the civil rights movement. And, like Al Gore, he knows the difference between marijuana and oregano.

Walter Mondale's 1984 defeat made a lot of Democrats think that honest talk about taxes means political oblivion. Babbitt's failure so far to catch on convinces them they're right. And so they may be, but Babbitt's experience doesn't necessarily prove it. He would have a tough row to hoe in any case, and not just because of his awkwardness on TV.

Babbitt's geographic base is both electorally trivial and physically remote from the states whose primaries count. His ties to the Democratic constituencies—the "interest groups"—are weak, except for the environmentalists. His natural social base, like Dukakis's, is the educated middle class, but unlike Dukakis he is culturally foreign to the ethnic, metropolitan, and labor components of the Democratic coalition.

And then there's the imponderable effect of the man's name—a small effect, no doubt, but worth mentioning. Most Americans under 50 have never heard of George F. Babbitt of the imaginary city of Zenith, Winnemac. But for a lot of older folks, including many who never cracked Sinclair Lewis's satirical novel of 1922, the name Babbitt is still laden with unfortunate associations. (Even my new dictionary defines "Babbittry" as self-important narrow-mindedness.) A candidate called Babbitt has a built-in problem with older voters, just as a candidate called Ed Grimley would have a built-in problem with younger ones.

THE BABBITT CAMPAIGN staff is pleased with the fallout from the stunt on NBC—"so-so TV, but very good politics," as Barton Gellman, a former TNR staff writer who is now Babbitt's issues director, puts it. The campaign is still strapped for funds (less than $40,000 in cash on hand, compared with Dukakis's $4.2 million), but fund-raising has picked up a bit since Stand-up Night. "The Babbitt campaign lives like most Americans, from paycheck to paycheck," says Charles P. Wolff, a fund-raiser and adviser. "There's no doubt in my mind that we will spend up to the limit in Iowa and New Hampshire."

Despite the polls and the money troubles, the campaign is in a high, we-happy-few mood. "There's a point at which you say, This is meant to be fun," the candidate told me as his van bounced along a road near Manchester. "Right now it's more fun than ever."

By pounding away at the need for honestly acknowledging that the fiscal crisis can't be solved without tax increases, Babbitt has created a character test he alone passes. Since the NBC debate he has taken to having his audiences do the standing up. He asks Iowa farmers and New Hampshire housewives to stand if they agree with him that politicians ought to have the courage to admit that it's going to take spending cuts and new taxes to deal with the budget crisis. A few straggle to their feet. Then he says he's not asking them if they *like* taxes ("I don't get a lot of people running up to me in the street saying, 'Bruce, please please raise my taxes' "), just if they honestly think taxes are needed. More people get up. Gradually, against a background sound of murmuring, shuffling, and chuckling, he coaxes almost everybody in the room to their feet. Then he tells them he hasn't asked them to stand up for a balanced budget alone ("I'm running for president, not bookkeeper"), but rather for the deficit-threatened programs they've believed in and fought for as Democrats. It's an interesting exercise in symbolism and participation—"our interactive stump speech," one aide calls it.

Unlike the other Democratic candidates, Babbitt has yet to have his moment. Maybe he never will. At this point his campaign seems as much an educational endeavor as a political one, and the other candidates are among those getting educated. "No serious candidate can rule out new taxes," Dukakis said a few days after the NBC debate. "I certainly don't." Gore has made similar noises. Gephardt is stressing his support for an oil import fee. Simon is scrambling to explain how he proposes to pay for his big jobs program. Without Babbitt he might not have had to bother. Babbitt probably won't win the presidency, but he has already won respect. He'll leave the race standing taller than he entered it. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

A Hazard of New Fortunes

The trouble with *Wall Street* is that it faces its subject squarely. In two senses. First, the film confronts complex material and stamps it with a die. Some of the complexities are caught within the pattern, but it's a familiar pattern just the same. A young hustler rises, falls, and learns a lesson therefrom. The director, Oliver Stone, who wrote the script with

Wall Street
(20th Century-Fox)

Stanley Weiser, used a similar pattern in *Platoon*, but the point of that commanding film was its texture. In fact the texture turns out to be the best part of *Wall Street* too, but its impact is not, could not be, comparable. Here the tragedies are less immediately visible: the action has to make them visible. But the action in Stone's new picture, for all the dexterous direction and satiric reproduction of ultramod behavior, is 1930s Warner Brothers morality drama.

That is one squareness, the shape. Another is the angle of approach. Stone's idea of dealing with Wall Street is simply to deal with Wall Street—head-on. In the best film I know about a stockbroker, Antonioni's *Eclipse*, the emphasis is on the man, not the market. Antonioni gave us plenty of the bustle—at least as it was in Rome 25 years ago—but his real interest was the man within the broker, what made him a broker and how his occupation affected his being. Stone's focus is the market—vivid, veristic recreation of the market. He shows us a good deal of the protagonist's life after business hours, but all the other stuff is decor, like his new clothes. Stone's main effort at "outsideness" is to give the man a blue-collar father to symbolize the rectitude from which the son has strayed—which makes the film as sentimental about blue-collar workers as it is formulaic about the spiritual price of success. Stone's film lacks any fresh angle of insight.

Still, it has excitement right from the start. As the sun rises over New York (yes, another Manhattan story that opens with shots of skyscrapers), as the hordes flow through the streets and on to the escalators, as Frank Sinatra sings "Fly Me to the Moon" on the soundtrack, battle begins. In *King John*, Shakespeare speaks of the English army as "rash, inconsiderate, fiery voluntaries" who have landed in France "to make a hazard of new fortunes here." So in *Wall Street*: fiery voluntaries are off to hazard new fortunes in these computerized, neon-lighted beehives. Stone bears down tightly on the swarming and yelling and head-clutching and exultation, on the hutches of the lowly and the suites of the mighty, on the floor of the Exchange. The editing is like machete strokes, clearing a way through the jungle for the advancing camera. Lesser than *Platoon* though the texture must be, nonetheless it's the strongest element in *Wall Street*. The dynamics are in its rhythms and context more than its personified drama. Stone reminds us that the gold standard is gone only technically: these people would make Nibelungs look serene.

But there is the story—and the leading actor. Charlie Sheen was the protagonist of *Platoon* and did well enough as a humanized charade figure, the innocent who descends into the slough and comes out desperate for innocence again. In *Wall Street*, however, Sheen is meant to be a driven, driving figure, a comer who impresses people, especially a legendary wheeler-dealer. Sheen has all the verve and displays all the lineaments of desire of a supermarket manager.

Others in the cast are better. Sheen's real father, Martin Sheen, plays his screen father, a foreman in aircraft maintenance, with union-dues hardheadedness. Daryl Hannah wears odd, expensive hats well as an interior designer who is young Sheen's Significant Other while he is thought to be significant. James Spader has dewy duplicity as a young lawyer who succumbs to insider temptations. Hal Holbrook does his folksy best with the thankless role of the old hand in the brokerage house who looks askance at newfangled doings, as if, before computers, brokerages consisted of old codgers sitting around a coal stove whittling, spitting tobacco juice and homilies.

The real leading role—in the sense that he leads Sheen on as example and tempter—is played by Michael Douglas, a character drawn from those notorious monsters of finance whose ethics are congruent with their egos. Douglas is becoming a figure to reckon with among American film actors, but the reckoning is not all favorable. He was funny and bright in *Romancing the Stone*, dramatically conventional in *Fatal Attraction*. Here he plays the 1980s Mephistopheles with everything the role needs except the assurance that he is overpoweringly in control of it. A younger Robert Duvall or George C. Scott—even a younger Kirk Douglas!—would have acted the role in a way that turned it inside out for us. With Michael Douglas, I felt that he was just about keeping up with the part's demands. It's almost as if he were *presenting* the role for a stronger person to see and take over, like a model presenting a garment for some-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Dead. John Huston's last film respects Joyce's cosmic story, but could not possibly encompass it. The real reward is Anjelica Huston's Eve-like performance as Gretta. (Reviewed 12/21/87)

House of Games. David Mamet establishes himself as a front-rank director-writer with this seemingly realistic yet abstract work about deceit and compulsion. (11/16/87)

Sammy and Rosie Get Laid. Almost overflows the screen with vitality. The makers of *My Beautiful Laundrette* deal here with race in London. Unique and strong. (11/30/87)

The Wannsee Conference. The point is its tone—cool and businesslike. A re-enactment—from the minutes—of the 1942 conference in which the Nazis settled the Final Solution. (12/7/87)

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one else really to wear.

This is certainly not to say that Douglas is ineffectual, only that he and the part are no more than evenly matched. In fact he does quite well with my favorite moment in the script, when he is alone on the beach at dawn outside his Long Island home, speaking on his cordless phone to Sheen. The scene has a touch of Gatsby floating in his swimming pool at the end of his story.

But for all its knowingness, the script has crudities. We're not clear as to who it is that reveals Douglas's real intent toward the airline he wants to buy: How did the tipster know and why did he spill it? Amid all the hip banter and thrust comes a line like Sheen's at his sick father's bedside, "I never told you, but I always loved you, dad." It's hard to believe that Douglas would fall for the trick that finally undoes him. And when the break comes between him and Sheen, the older man says, "I look at you, I see myself. You could have been one of the great ones." (Besides the triteness, it's not believable about Sheen.)

But the worst line is the last line. Sheen père is taking his son to the place where he will face the consequences of misconduct. In the car, pa says that maybe all this will be good for the young man. Perhaps from now on he will "create, instead of living by the buying and selling of others." What twaddle—a distorting sentimentality about the economic structure of every society, capitalist or otherwise. It's understandable, in character terms, that a father who is a skilled craftsman might prefer a life for his son other than marketing and merchandising, but the position of the line, italicized as the film's last utterance, makes it the moral of the whole story. Thus it confirms that, for all the electric energy and hipness of the film, it is only one more Hollywood piety, dolled up in designer dress, a sheep in wolf's clothing.

But I learned—I think I learned—one thing from *Wall Street*. Every new expensive yuppie restaurant in New York is so noisy that couples sitting next to each other have to shout. Restaurant managers tell me that their patrons want it that way, and the waiting lines confirm this. The Wall Streeters among those patrons apparently spend their working days in the midst of comparable noise and not only don't mind it in the evening, they want it. By welcoming the noise, they prove that they're at least used to the boom of boom and bust.

EDWARD ROTHSTEIN ON MUSIC

Dimsum Nixon

The twists and turns of the contemporary musical "avant-garde" will someday require a chronicler all their own, but I am sure that the opera *Nixon in China*—which opened at the Houston Grand Opera, played at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (where I saw it), and will now proceed to the Kennedy Center, the Netherlands Opera, and the Los Angeles Music Center Opera—will deserve a separate chapter. As these hosts and sponsors, past and future, attest, the "avant-garde" is now big business, and so deserves mention only in quotation marks. The contemporary avant-gardist need not fight the mainstream: he need only claim to.

Nixon in China has all the credentials needed to certify centrality. It was conceived and directed by Peter Sellars, composed by John Adams, conducted by Edo de Waart with a libretto by Alice Goodman, choreographed by Mark Morris. I expected Adams's music to be a calculated mixture of kitsch and facile allusion. I expected Sellars's direction to swerve between hauntingly brilliant and quixotically willful. I expected the opera as a whole to be an extension of the minimalist operatic style and countercultural imagery pioneered by Philip Glass and Robert Wilson. I expected all this—and was surprised. For *Nixon in China* isn't even coherent enough to arouse such mixed reactions.

And if this much-hyped, much-prepped, much-attended work so thwarted even a skeptic's expectations, something quite unusual must be taking place. How could the intermission crowds be stifling yawns (and they were when I went) when this was an opera that promised everything—not only the avant-garde in music and theater, but the avant-garde in politics too, dramatic figures of mythic importance: Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong? This was a work that, in Sellars's original conception, was to be a recounting of the former president's trip to China in February 1972. It was to turn that event into a primal meeting of cultures. Its six scenes recount the landing of the Nixons in Beijing, the meeting with Mao, the first banquet in the Great Hall of the People, a tour Mrs. Nixon takes to a pig farm and a glass factory, a performance of Mme Mao's ballet at the Beijing opera, and a last introspective night in Beijing.

If Glass's *Satyagraha* was a heroic opera about Gandhi, in which each scene about his life had a counterpart in the 1960s counterculture, *Nixon in China* apparently was to be a sort of sequel, the meeting of the counterculture's demonic villains (Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger) with some of its heroes (Mao and Chou Enlai and the Chinese people). The minimalist music of Adams—more vulgar and more pompous than anything Glass has written—would presumably be used to heighten the contrasts between East and West, to show how, if in *Satyagraha* the East could be an inspiration to the West, here the East could at the very least outclass the West.

To a certain extent, the opera follows this map quite precisely. Henry Kissinger is sung by Thomas Hammons, his bespectacled head tilted forward, his chins pressed against his chest, looking like a college professor turned derelict—a buffoonish villain. During the final introspective scene in which the characters dream of their hopeful pasts, his only role is to go to the bathroom. Kissinger also boasts to Mao of assigning the chairman's books at Harvard, and seems altogether less swift than Nixon; his music is bumptious, vulgar, intemperate. Finally, during the opera's fantastical ballet when the visiting Americans are shown Mme Mao's agitprop work, "The Red Detachment of Women," Kissinger appears as a character in the ballet—a villainous overlord, leering and leching, whip in hand, pressing his body against a bound, innocent peasant, singing: "When the first cut/—Come on you slut!—/Scored her brown skin/I started in,/Man upon hen!"

Nixon—finely sung by James Maddalena—seems to have a bit of the buffoonish villain about him as well. When his plane is shown landing outside Beijing, the music becomes positively heroic, bombastic, as fakely grand as only Adams could make it. Nixon walking out of the plane received guffaws from the audience just for the tilt of his head and the wave of his hand. He is

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obviously a fool abroad—and at sea too, when meeting Mao, whose book-lined shelves and gnomic comments are supported by the cool, imitative melodies of three secretaries (known informally during rehearsals as the Maoettes). In case anyone misses the point, Adams gives Nixon a sort of self-important stuttering musical style, when not being overtly nostalgic (touched with musical hints of Glenn Miller).

THESE MAY sound like the ingredients for a strident, satiric polemic—a revival and celebration of the political lusts of the counterculture. But there were other ambitions at work. At least one was expressed by the librettist, Goodman, who insisted that the opera be a "heroic" opera, not a satire; the text was written in near-rhyming couplets. The idea may have been to append to these political figurines some deeper nuance and complication, the grandeur of this meeting of cultures.

But the execution of such high ambition was also fraught with complication if not contradiction. With poetic grandeur, Nixon calls himself "An old cold warrior/Piloting towards an unknown shore/Through shoals"—a proud vision undercut as he undresses, giving his clothes to Pat, who is standing dutifully nearby. Pat herself (sung by Carolann Page) begins a scene in cutesy sentiment ("I treat each day/Like Christmas"), just as she is about to be portrayed as a sensitive observer of Chinese culture. But the most telling ambiguities occur later in the opera, when it is clear that there really is no dramatic structure to the work at all, so uncertain is it about its subject and its purpose.

For in the phantasmagorical ballet scene, in which Kissinger demonically appears as representative of the Evil the Communists overturned, Pat Nixon runs onstage, later assisted by Dick himself, to help the poor victims of his oppression. And then, after the opera dutifully shows the victory of the revolution and the People's Army, Mme Mao (Trudy Ellen Craney) herself holds aloft the Little Red Book and passionately sings as the dancers turn violent, bashing each others' heads in the name of the Cultural Revolution.

What is happening here? What are we to make of her hysterical shrieking about "the book," the brutality of the Cultural Revolution, the villainy of Henry K., the intercession of Pat, and then, in the final scene of the opera, the two couples—Mao and Madame, Dick and Pat—each engaged in sentimental reminiscence and embrace? It is as if the opera's principal creators had decided against a political cartoon but then had no idea of where to go, and so resorted to touching on every possible permutation of interpretation without ever settling on any. Nothing depends on, or grows out of, anything else.

SOME EXPLANATION of all this is found in Goodman's program notes, which muse about the characters' disillusion and motivation in this "heroic opera"; each character, she asserts, is meant to be as "eloquent as possible." Thus, Nixon is occasionally fleshed out with human longing and nostalgia, American innocence and thrust; Mao takes on some earthly shadows as he speaks his knowing ironies. (Even Kissinger, I assume the thinking goes, must be somewhat human; he has to use a toilet.) I am not sure where Goodman would have gone with this material on her own, but I am sure that what is left is much less than eloquent. There is evidence of many hands at work in this opera, each fussing with the work of the other—opera by committee. Goodman hardly keeps it a secret:

> There are places where the music goes against the grain of the libretto, and places where the staging goes against the grain of both. My Nixon is not quite the same character as John Adams's Nixon, and they both differ slightly from Peter Sellars's Nixon, not to mention James Maddalena's. My view of the Cultural Revolution is not the same as theirs, and theirs are not the same.

She calls the collaboration "polyphonic," but the result is more polymorphously perverse. Anything goes, characters shift under our eyes, the heroes turn villainous, the villains turn sentimental, and all the issues of revolution and reformation, of ideals and power, are discarded with postmodernist distaste for distinction. It's a Chinese brunch, all courses offered.

By the end, the Nixons become somewhat sympathetic characters (a shock for anyone who wants the comfort of cartoons) and the Chinese somewhat confused by the forces of history. But this is just another perspective thrown in, not a dramatic resolution or revelation. The opera depends on lyrical talk during the long last scene as if it has lost the will to dramatize what it is saying; it can't take the dissolution of its own clichés seriously enough. That would undercut the very notion of doing an opera that appealed to the "avant-garde."

BY CONTRAST, Kissinger, in the first volume of his memoirs, actually presents a portrait of Mao that could well be the focus of a contemporary *Boris Godunov*. He was a man who summoned his guests suddenly and without warning, and lived as mysteriously as the emperors he disdained. He projected such "raw, concentrated willpower" that Kissinger is as awed by this "colossus" (a word used without irony), "that great, demonic, prescient, overwhelming personality," as by Mao's lucid, elliptical conversation. "It was as if one were dealing with a figure from another world who occasionally lifted a corner of the shroud that veils the future, permitting a glimpse but never the entire vision that he alone has seen." One sentence Kissinger hears makes its way into the opera's libretto in altered form. Nixon said that the chairman's writings "moved a nation and have changed the world," and Mao replied, "I have not been able to change it. I have only been able to change a few places in the vicinity of Beijing."

This declaration, treated in offhand fashion in the opera, is taken by Kissinger as central: the modest claim of a man whose life had been devoted to overturning the entire structure of his society. "In its matter-of-fact resignation it underlined the revolutionary dilemma." For what began in revolution congealed into regimentation, a "fate that so cruelly mocked the suffering and meaning of a lifetime of struggle." Hence, Kissinger writes, came the cycles of frenzied campaigns to continue the revolution, destroying the country, killing millions, overturning institutions, purging the Party—tragic cycles, which, Kissinger hints, no one understood better than the chairman himself.

The Kissinger who wrote in this way was no mere overlord or dissolute professor; the Mao he describes hardly resembles the man who appears through the haze of confusion and contradiction in this dull, dissipated opera. To have taken such a perspective into account would have meant discarding the received political and aesthetic worlds, and attempting a work that was not postmodern but tragic, not "avant-garde" but avant-garde. □

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The Nobel Lecture.

UNCOMMON VISAGE

BY JOSEPH BRODSKY

I.

FOR SOMEONE rather private, for someone who all his life has preferred his private condition to any role of social significance, and who went in this preference rather far—far from his motherland to say the least, for it is better to be a total failure in a democracy than a martyr, or the crème de la crème, in a tyranny—for such a person to find himself all of a sudden on this rostrum is a somewhat uncomfortable and trying experience.

This sensation is aggravated not so much by the thought of those who stood here before me as by the memory of those who have been bypassed by this honor, who were not given this chance to address *urbi et orbi*, as they say, from this rostrum, and whose cumulative silence is sort of searching, to no avail, for release through this speaker here.

The only thing that can reconcile one to this sort of situation is the simple realization that—for stylistic reasons, in the first place—one writer cannot speak for another writer, one poet for another poet especially; that had Osip Mandelstam, or Marina Tsvetaeva, or Robert Frost, or Anna Akhmatova, or Wystan Auden stood here, they couldn't have helped but speak precisely for themselves; and they, too, might have felt somewhat uncomfortable.

These shades disturb me constantly; they are disturbing me today as well. In any case, they do not spur one to eloquence. In my better moments, I deem myself their sum total, though invariably inferior to any one of them individually. For it is not possible to better them on the page; nor is it possible to better them in actual life. And it is precisely their lives, no matter how tragic or bitter they were, that often move me—more often, perhaps, than the case should be—to regret the passage of time. If the next life exists—and I can no more deny them the possibility of eternal life than I can forget their existence in this one—if the next world does exist, they will, I hope, forgive me, and the quality of what I am about to utter: after all, it is not one's conduct on a podium which dignity in our profession is measured by.

I have mentioned only five of them, those whose deeds and whose lot matter so much to me, if only because if it were not for them, I, both as a man and writer, would amount to much less; in any case I wouldn't be standing here today. There were more of them, those shades—better still, sources of light: lamps? stars?—more, of course, than just five. And each one of them is capable of rendering me absolutely mute. The number of those is substantial in the life of any conscious man of letters; in my case, it doubles, thanks to the two cultures to which fate has willed me to belong. Matters are not made easier by thoughts about contemporaries and fellow writers in both these cultures, poets and fiction writers whose gifts I rank above my own, and who, had they found themselves on this rostrum, would have come to the point long ago, for surely they have more to tell the world than I do.

I will allow myself, therefore, to make a number of remarks here—disjointed, perhaps, stumbling, perhaps even perplexing in their randomness. However, the amount of time allotted to me to collect my thoughts, as well as my very occupation, will, or may, I hope, shield me, at least partially, against charges of being chaotic. A man of my occupation seldom claims a systematic mode of thinking; at worst, he claims to have a system—but even that, in his case, is a borrowing from a milieu, from a social order, or from the pursuit of philosophy at a tender age. Nothing convinces an artist more of the arbitrariness of the means to which he resorts to attain a goal—however permanent it may be—than the creative process itself, the process of composition. Verse really does, in Akhmatova's words, grow from rubbish; the roots of prose are no more honorable.

II.

IF ART TEACHES anything (to the artist, in the first place), it is the privateness of the human condition. Being the most ancient as well as the most literal form of private enterprise, it fosters in a man, knowingly or unwittingly, a sense of his uniqueness, of individuality, of separateness—thus turning him from a social animal into an autonomous "I." Lots of things can be shared: a bed, a piece of bread, convictions, a mistress, but not a poem by, say, Rainer Maria Rilke. A work of art, of literature especially, and a poem in particular, addresses a man tête-à-tête, entering with him into direct—free of any go-betweens—relations.

It is for this reason that art in general, literature especially, and poetry in particular, is not exactly favored by champions of the common good, masters of the masses, heralds of historical necessity. For there, where art has stepped, where a poem has been read, they discover, in place of the anticipated consent and unanimity, indifference and polyphony; in place of the resolve to act, inattention and fastidiousness. In other words, into the little zeros with which the champions of the common good and the rulers of the masses tend to operate, art introduces a "period, period, comma, and a minus," transforming each zero into a tiny human, albeit not always a pretty, face.

The great Baratynsky, speaking of his Muse, characterized her as possessing an "uncommon visage." It's in acquiring this "uncommon visage" that the meaning of human existence seems to lie, since for this uncommonness we are, as it were, prepared genetically. Regardless of whether one is a writer or a reader, one's task consists first of all in mastering a life that is one's own, not imposed or prescribed from without, no matter how noble its appearance may be. For each of us is issued but one life, and we know full well how it all ends. It would be regrettable to squander this one chance on someone else's appearance, someone else's experience, on a tautology—regrettable all the more because the heralds of historical necessity, at whose urging a man may be prepared to agree to this tautology, will not go to the grave with him, or give him so much as a thank-you.

Language and, presumably, literature are things that are more ancient and inevitable, more durable than any form of social organization. The revulsion, irony, or indifference often expressed by literature toward the state is essentially

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Joseph Brodsky was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1987. His new book of poems, *To Urania*, will be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux this spring.

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the reaction of the permanent—better yet, the infinite—against the temporary, against the finite. To say the least, as long as the state permits itself to interfere with the affairs of literature, literature has the right to interfere with the affairs of the state. A political system, a form of social organization, like any system in general, is by definition a form of the past tense that aspires to impose itself upon the present (and often on the future as well); and a man whose profession is language is the last one who can afford to forget this. The real danger for a writer is not so much the possibility (and often the certainty) of persecution on the part of the state, as it is the possibility of finding oneself mesmerized by the state's features, which, whether monstrous or undergoing changes for the better, are always temporary.

THE PHILOSOPHY of the state, its ethics—not to mention its aesthetics—are always "yesterday." Language and literature are always "today," and often—particularly in the case where a political system is orthodox—they may even constitute "tomorrow." One of literature's merits is precisely that it helps a person to make the time of his existence more specific, to distinguish himself from the crowd of his predecessors as well as his like numbers, to avoid tautology—that is, the fate otherwise known by the honorific term "victim of history." What makes art in general, and literature in particular, remarkable, what distinguishes them from life, is precisely that they abhor repetition. In everyday life you can tell the same joke thrice and, thrice getting a laugh, become the life of the party. In art this sort of conduct is called "cliché."

Art is a recoilless weapon, and its development is determined not by the individuality of the artist, but by the dynamics and the logic of the material itself, by the previous fate of the means that each time demand (or suggest) a qualitatively new aesthetic solution. Possessing its own genealogy, dynamics, logic, and future, art is not synonymous with, but at best parallel to, history; and the manner by which it exists is by continually creating a new aesthetic reality. That is why it is often found "ahead of progress," ahead of history, whose main instrument is—should we not, once more, improve upon Marx—precisely the cliché.

Nowadays there exists a rather widely held view, postulating that in his work a writer, in particular a poet, should make use of the language of the street, the language of the crowd. For all its democratic appearance, and its palpable advantages for a writer, this assertion is quite absurd, and represents an attempt to subordinate art, in this case literature, to history. It is only if we have resolved that it is time for Homo sapiens to come to a halt in his development that literature should speak the language of the people. Otherwise it is the people who should speak the language of literature.

ON THE WHOLE, every new aesthetic reality makes man's ethical reality more precise. For aesthetics is the mother of ethics. The categories of "good" and "bad" are, first and foremost, aesthetic ones, at least etymologically preceding the categories of "good" and "evil." If in ethics not "all is permitted," it is precisely because not "all is permitted" in aesthetics, because the number of colors in the spectrum is limited. The tender babe who cries and rejects the stranger who, on the contrary, reaches out to him, does so instinctively, makes an aesthetic choice, not a moral one.

Aesthetic choice is a highly individual matter, and aesthetic experience is always a private one. Every new aesthetic reality makes one's experience even more private; and this kind of privacy, assuming at times the guise of literary (or some other) taste, can in itself turn out to be, if not a guarantee, then a form of defense, against enslavement. For a man with taste, particularly with literary taste, is less susceptible to the refrains and the rhythmical incantations peculiar to any version of political demagogy. The point is not so much that virtue does not constitute a guarantee for producing a masterpiece, as that evil, especially political evil, is always a bad stylist. The more substantial an individual's aesthetic experience is, the sounder his taste, the sharper his moral focus, the freer—though not necessarily the happier—he is.

It is precisely in this applied, rather than Platonic, sense that we should understand Dostoyevsky's remark that beauty will save the world, or Matthew Arnold's belief that we shall be saved by poetry. It is probably too late for the world, but for the individual man there always remains a chance. An aesthetic instinct develops in man rather rapidly, for even without fully realizing who he is and what he actually requires, a person instinctively knows what he doesn't like and what doesn't suit him. In an anthropological respect, let me reiterate, a human being is an aesthetic creature before he is an ethical one. Therefore, it is not that art, particularly literature, is a byproduct of our species' development, but just the reverse. If what distinguishes us from other members of the animal kingdom is speech, then literature—and poetry in particular, being the highest form of locution—is, to put it bluntly, the goal of our species.

I AM FAR from suggesting the idea of compulsory training in verse composition; nevertheless the subdivision of society into intelligentsia and "all the rest" seems to me unacceptable. In moral terms, this situation is comparable to the subdivision of society into the poor and the rich; but if it is still possible to find some purely physical or material grounds for the existence of social inequality, for intellectual inequality these are inconceivable. Equality in this respect, unlike in anything else, has been guaranteed to us by nature. I am speaking not of education, but of the education in speech, the slightest imprecision in which may trigger the intrusion of false choice into one's life. The existence of literature prefigures existence on literature's plane of regard—and not only in the moral sense, but lexically as well. If a piece of music still allows a person the possibility of choosing between the passive role of listener and the active one of performer, a work of literature—of the art which is, to use Montale's phrase, hopelessly semantic—dooms him to the role of performer only.

In this role, it would seem to me, a person should appear more often than in any other. Moreover, it seems to me that, as a result of the population explosion and the attendant, ever-increasing atomization of society (i.e., the ever-increasing isolation of the individual), this role becomes more and more inevitable for a person. I don't suppose that I know more about life than anyone of my age, but it seems to me that, in the capacity of an interlocutor, a book is more reliable than a friend or a beloved. A novel or a poem is not a monologue, but a conversation of a writer with a reader, a conversation, I repeat, that is very private, excluding all others—if you will, mutually misanthropic. And in the moment of this conversation a writer is equal to a reader, as well as the other way around, regardless of whether the writer is a great one or not. This equality is the equality of consciousness. It remains with a person for the rest of his

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life in the form of memory, foggy or distinct; and, sooner or later, appropriately or not, it conditions a person's conduct. It's precisely this that I have in mind in speaking of the role of the performer, all the more natural for one because a novel or a poem is the product of mutual loneliness—of a writer or a reader.

IN THE HISTORY of our species, in the history of Homo sapiens, the book is an anthropological development, similar essentially to the invention of the wheel. Having emerged in order to give us some idea not so much of our origins as of what that sapiens is capable of, a book constitutes a means of transportation through the space of experience, at the speed of a turning page. This movement, like every movement, becomes flight from the common denominator, from an attempt to elevate this denominator's line, previously never reaching higher than the groin, to our heart, to our consciousness, to our imagination. This flight is the flight in the direction of "uncommon visage," in the direction of the numerator, in the direction of autonomy, in the direction of privacy. Regardless of whose image we are created in, there are already five billion of us, and for a human being there is no other future save that outlined by art. Otherwise, what lies ahead is the past—the political one, first of all, with all its mass police entertainment.

In any event, the condition of society in which art in general, and literature in particular, are the property or prerogative of a minority appears to me unhealthy and dangerous. I am not appealing for the replacement of the state with a library, although this thought has visited me frequently; but there is no doubt in my mind that, had we been choosing our leaders on the basis of their reading experience and not their political programs, there would be much less grief on earth. It seems to me that a potential master of our fates should be asked, first of all, not about how he imagines the course of his foreign policy, but about his attitude toward Stendahl, Dickens, Dostoyevsky. If only because the lock and stock of literature is indeed human diversity and perversity, it turns out to be a reliable antidote for any attempt—whether familiar or yet to be invented—toward a total mass solution to the problems of human existence. As a form of moral insurance, at least, literature is much more dependable than a system of beliefs or a philosophical doctrine.

Since there are no laws that can protect us from ourselves, no criminal code is capable of preventing a true crime against literature; though we can condemn the material suppression of literature—the persecution of writers, acts of censorship, the burning of books—we are powerless when it comes to its worst violation: the neglect of books, the non-reading of them. For that crime, a person pays with his whole life; if the offender is a nation, it pays with its history. Living in the country I live in, I would be the first prepared to believe that there is a set dependency between a person's material well-being and his literary ignorance. What keeps me from doing so is the history of that country in which I was born and grew up. For, reduced to a cause-and-effect minimum, to a crude formula, the Russian tragedy is precisely the tragedy of a society in which literature turned out to be the prerogative of the minority: the celebrated Russian intelligentsia.

I have no wish to enlarge upon the subject, no wish to darken this evening with thoughts of the tens of millions of human lives destroyed by other millions, since what occurred in Russia in the first half of the 20th century occurred before the introduction of automatic weapons—in the name of the triumph of a political doctrine whose unsoundness is already

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manifested in the fact that it requires human sacrifice for its realization. I'll just say that I believe—not empirically, alas, but only theoretically—that, for someone who has read a lot of Dickens, to shoot his like in the name of some idea is somewhat more problematic than for someone who has read no Dickens. And I am speaking precisely about reading Dickens, Sterne, Stendahl, Dostoyevsky, Flaubert, Balzac, Melville, Proust, Musil, and so forth; that is, about literature, not about literacy or education. A literate, educated person, to be sure, is fully capable, after reading some political treatise or tract, of killing his like, and even of experiencing, in so doing, a rapture of conviction. Lenin was literate, Stalin was literate, so was Hitler; as for Mao Zedong, he even wrote verse. What all these men had in common, though, was that their hit list was longer than their reading list.

However, before I move on to poetry, I would like to add that it would make sense to regard the Russian experience as a warning, if for no other reason than that the social structure of the West up to now is, on the whole, analogous to what existed in Russia prior to 1917. (This, by the way, is what explains the popularity in the West of the 19th-century Russian psychological novel, and the relative lack of success of contemporary Russian prose. The social relations that emerged in Russia in the 20th century presumably seem no less exotic to the reader than do the names of the characters, which prevent him from identifying with them.) For example, the number of political parties, on the eve of the October coup in 1917, was no fewer than what we find today in the United States or Britain. In other words, a dispassionate observer might remark that in a certain sense the 19th century is still going on in the West, while in Russia it came to an end; and if I say that it ended in tragedy, this is, in the first place, because of the size of the human toll taken in the course of that social—or chronological—change. For in a real tragedy, it is not the hero who perishes; it is the chorus.

III.

ALTHOUGH FOR a man whose mother tongue is Russian, to speak about political evil is as natural as digestion, I would here like to change the subject. What's wrong with discourses about the obvious is that they corrupt consciousness with their easiness, with the quickness with which they provide one with moral comfort, with the sensation of being right. Herein lies their temptation, similar in its nature to the temptation of a social reformer who begets this evil. The realization, or rather the comprehension, of this temptation, and the rejection of it, are perhaps responsible to a certain extent for the destinies of many of my contemporaries, responsible for the literature that emerged from under their pens. It, that literature, was neither a flight from history nor a muffling of memory, as it may seem from the outside. "How can one write poetry after Auschwitz?" inquired Adorno; and one familiar with Russian history can repeat the same question by merely changing the name of the camp—and repeat it perhaps with even greater justification, since the number of people who perished in Stalin's camps far surpasses the number of German prison-camp victims. "And how can one eat lunch?" the American poet Mark Strand once retorted. In any case, the generation to which I belong has proven capable of writing that poetry.

THAT GENERATION—the generation born precisely at the time when the Auschwitz crematoria were working full blast, when Stalin was at the zenith of his God-like, absolute power, which seemed sponsored by Mother Nature herself—that generation came into the world, it appears, in order to continue what, theoretically, was supposed to be interrupted in those crematoria and in the anonymous common graves of Stalin's archipelago. The fact that not everything got interrupted, at least not in Russia, can be credited in no small degree to my generation, and I am no less proud of belonging to it than I am of standing here today. And the fact that I am standing here today is a recognition of the services that generation has rendered to culture; recalling a phrase from Mandelstam, I would add, to world culture. Looking back, I can say now that we were beginning in an empty—indeed, a terrifyingly wasted—place, and that, intuitively rather than consciously, we aspired precisely to the recreation of the effect of culture's continuity, to the reconstruction of its forms and tropes, toward filling its few surviving, and often totally compromised, forms with our own new, or appearing to us as new, contemporary content.

There existed, presumably, another path: the path of further deformation, the poetics of ruins and debris, of minimalism, of choked breath. If we rejected it, it was not at all because we thought that it was the path of self-dramatization, or because we were extremely animated by the idea of preserving the hereditary nobility of the forms of culture we knew, the forms that were equivalent, in our consciousness, to forms of human dignity. We rejected it because in reality the choice wasn't ours, but, in fact, culture's own—and this choice, again, was aesthetic rather than moral.

TO BE SURE, it is natural for a person to perceive himself not as an instrument of culture, but, on the contrary, as its creator and custodian. But if today I assert the opposite, it's not because toward the close of the 20th century there is a certain charm in paraphrasing Plotinus, Lord Shaftesbury, Schelling, or Novalis, but because, unlike anyone else, a poet always knows that what in the vernacular is called the voice of the Muse is, in reality, the dictate of the language; that it's not the language that happens to be his instrument, but that he is language's means toward the continuation of its existence. Language, however, even if one imagines it as a certain animate creature (which would only be just), is not capable of ethical choice.

A person sets out to write a poem for a variety of reasons: to win the heart of his beloved; to express his attitude toward the reality surrounding him, be it a landscape or a state; to capture his state of mind at a given instant; to leave—as he thinks at that moment—a trace on the earth. He resorts to this form—the poem—most likely for unconsciously mimetic reasons: the black vertical clot of words on the white sheet of paper presumably reminds him of his own situation in the world, of the balance between space and his body. But regardless of the reasons for which he takes up the pen, and regardless of the effect produced by what emerges from under that pen on his audience—however great or small it may be—the immediate consequence of this enterprise is the sensation of coming into direct contact with language, or more precisely, the sensation of immediately falling into dependence on it, on everything that has already been uttered, written, and accomplished in it.

This dependence is absolute, despotic; but it unshackles as well. For, while always older than the writer, language still possesses the colossal centrifugal energy imparted to it by its temporal potential—that is, by all time lying ahead. And this potential is determined not so much by

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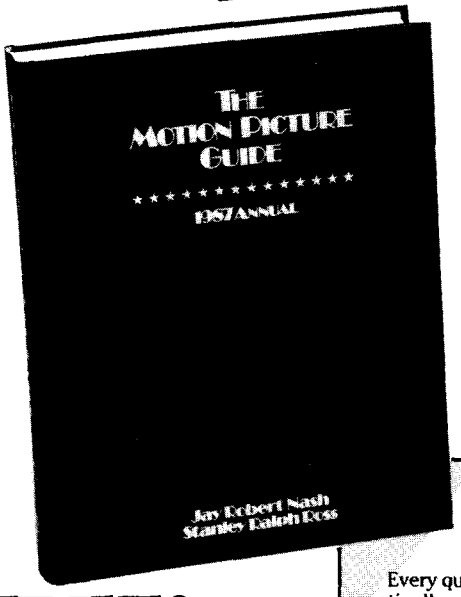

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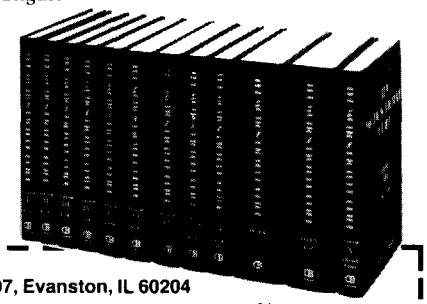

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the quantitative body of the nation that speaks it (though it is determined by that, too), as by the quality of the poem written in it. It will suffice to recall the authors of Greek or Roman antiquity; it will suffice to recall Dante. And that which is being created today in Russian or English, for example, guarantees the existence of these languages over the course of the next millennium also. The poet, I wish to repeat, is language's means for existence—or, as my beloved Auden said, he is the one by whom it lives. I who write these lines will cease to be; so will you who read them. But the language in which they are written and in which you read them will remain, not merely because language is a more lasting thing than man, but because it is more capable of mutation.

One who writes a poem, however, writes it not because he courts fame with posterity, although often he hopes that a poem will outlive him, at least briefly. One who writes a poem writes it because the language prompts, or simply dictates, the next line. Beginning a poem, the poet as a rule doesn't know the way it is going to come out; and at times he is very surprised by the way it turns out, since often it turns out better than he expected, often his thought carries further than he reckoned. And that is the moment when the future of language invades its present.

There are, as we know, three modes of cognition: analytical, intuitive, and the mode that was known to the biblical prophets, revelation. What distinguishes poetry from other forms of literature is that it uses all three of them at once (gravitating primarily toward the second and the third). For all three of them are given in the language; and there are times when, by means of a single word, a single rhyme, the writer of a poem manages to find himself where no one has ever been before him, further, perhaps, than he himself would have wished for. The one who writes a poem writes it above all because verse writing is an extraordinary accelerator of consciousness, of thinking, of comprehending the universe. Having experienced this acceleration once, one is no longer capable of abandoning the chance to repeat this experience; one falls into dependency on this process, the way others fall into dependency on drugs or alcohol. One who finds himself in this sort of dependency on language is, I guess, what they call a poet.

(Translated by Barry Rubin. Copyright © 1987 by The Nobel Foundation.)

THE EMPIRE STRIKES OUT

Mortal Splendor: The American Empire in Transition by Walter Russell Mead

(Houghton Mifflin, 381 pp., $19.95, $9.95 paper)

One of the anomalies of the American Empire, as future historians will no doubt note with curiosity, is that the American people were hardly aware of its existence before they had to cope with the consequences of its demise. That we possess an empire—wealthier and more extensive than any hitherto known—is so taken for granted by the rest of the world as hardly to merit comment. We alone seem to find the notion surprising.

It is not evil to be an imperial power. Most of the illustrious states of history were, including Athens. But it serves little purpose to be one and insist that one is not. While it is true that one can, like Molière's prose-speaker, engage in an action all one's life and not know the proper term for it, the costs and effects of empire are no less real for being unexamined.

Instead of viewing the American Empire as a term of opprobrium, let us simply consider it a description of what has been, on balance, a phenomenally successful institution. It began in earnest after the Spanish-American War of 1898, when we consolidated our hold over the Caribbean and, with the acquisition of the Philippines, extended our reach to Asia. But it did not become truly global until 1945, following the war that was a debacle for the other industrialized nations but a boon for us. We brought into our nest the colonies that declining empires such as Britain, France, and the Netherlands could no longer afford. Our factories and fields, unscarred by bombs, produced half the world's goods. The (then) almighty dollar became the world's reserve currency. This made New York the world's financial capital, and also allowed us to cover our deficits by printing money that others, for a time, considered as "good as gold."

Our richer protectorates in Europe, and Japan, having chosen the pursuit of wealth over glory, even over self-defense, allowed us to run their foreign policy. They also bought, and continue to buy, our Treasury IOUs, thus allowing us to import more of their goods than our labors would otherwise permit. The people of what we now call the Third World hewed our wood and drew our water, and the Soviets confined themselves mostly to their mini-empire in Eastern Europe. Being immensely rich and self-confident, we thought we could do just about anything if we willed it hard enough.

But in the early 1970s things started to go wrong. First there was Vietnam, which demonstrated—as Suez and Kenya had for the British, and Indochina and Algeria for the French—that there was a limit to what the home front was willing to pay for the empire. The Vietnam War was lost not because of the media or the anti-war movement (the former was more timid and the latter less effective than the rewriters of history would have us believe), but because the American people had had enough. That is usually the way empires are lost.

Then came OPEC, which showed that the Third World, or at least the part of it that industrialized nations cannot do without, had a whip of its own. Our empire has not been the same since. The Reagan military buildup, with its wistful attempt to buy respect through high-cost high tech, weakened our economy without intimidating those yapping at our heels. Witness our proud half-trillion-dollar new fleet paralyzed in the Persian Gulf by a handful of Chinese missiles and World War II vintage mines. Even worse, we have paid for this shiny, but for the most part unusable, hardware by selling off pieces of America to European and Japanese investors.

American Empire: the term now has an almost nostalgic ring. Like the Wild West, one can imagine it as an attraction at some future theme park. The real empire, the one that made friend and foe stand up and salute, is slowly passing into memory. It is a victim both of historical change (the rest of the world has recovered from the war) and of an economy that can no longer sustain the burden. Though a long way from being out, we are now an imperial power in decline. This might be a cause for alarm if the empire continued to produce riches in which we all basked, however undeser-

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vedly. But the truth is that empire is an expensive business. There are easier ways to make money. Ask the Japanese or the Germans. The problem with empires is that they are acquired in a frenzy of adolescent exuberance, milked for a time in a soft glow of smug self-satisfaction (the French had their *mission civilisatrice*, the British their "rule of law," and we our global "responsibilities"), and then paid for, like many of the fruits of adolescent exuberance, with sweat and treasure.

Yes, our entrepreneurs find cheap labor in such places as Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and Taiwan: busy hands to sew baseballs and assemble computer chips. But *cui bono*? Not the American worker, who sees his job exported "offshore" in the name of economic efficiency. Not the American economy, which is learning too late that it has to fight not only for foreign markets, but also for domestic ones. And not the average American, who is instructed, for example, to pay several billion dollars to provide an escort service that will allow Kuwaiti oil to flow without impediment to Japanese factories. The trouble with empire, as our rich allies learned long ago, is that it ceases to be profitable at about the time that it starts to seem comfortable.

MUCH IS being written these days about the problems of empire, whether in defense (the "anguish of power") or in sorrow (why don't our rich allies shape up?). Most of these works tend to take the empire as a good thing for the world as well as for us. Now, into this mire of postimperial nostalgia steps a fire-breathing critic, himself a child of the empire. Walter Russell Mead, who was still in college during our last imperial adventure in Indochina, sees the empire as the fount of our own troubles as well as many of the world's evils. Like most leftist critics, he deplores the way we prop up tinhorn dictators, exploit the planet's downtrodden masses, and provide a healthy climate for mass injustice.

But unlike most critics on the left, he is not content merely with excoriating the empire—in the hope either that we will be shamed into mending our ways or threatened into changing them by the global proletariat. Rather he uses the empire as a point of departure to examine the effect that imperial diplomacy has had on the kind of society that America has become. Thus this is a book not so much about the American empire, despite its title, as about imperial America. Empire, like almost everything else, has its price. What has ours cost? Who benefits? Who suffers? The quest leads Mead—with his taste for historical analogy and his talent for making economics seem almost a human science—down provocative byways.

Mortal Splendor, with its deliberately Gibbonesque title and theme, is in part about the decline of the empire over which we ruled proudly, if briefly. Even more it is an examination of our society and our very psyche. Into this study the author seems to have thrown virtually everything he has thought about American history, not to mention psychology and literature. The result is an inquiry of considerable originality and daring that cuts across the usual categories. For him empire is both a condition and a metaphor, and the way in which he plays one against the other is what gives this book its special strength. With its trenchant wit and elegance of phrase, this is a most unusual work of political analysis: sometimes exasperating, usually irreverent, and almost continually thought-provoking.

LIKE A GOOD neo-Marxist, Mead sees the empire as an exercise in exploitation. Its structure is of three tiers. In the first he puts the rich, industrialized countries of northern Europe, the old British dominions, and Japan: all liberal democracies with various degrees of cushions for the poor to alleviate the inequities of the market. These nations sometimes complain about American bossiness, but they are "too deeply committed to the privileges of empire to take serious steps against the imperial order." In the second tier he places the also-rans: states like Argentina and Greece, those on the verge of breakthrough into the first rank but never quite making it. Finally, at the bottom of the heap lie the impoverished low-wage, bad-health, dim-future states we lump together under the rubric of the Third World. These are the countries to which we send International Monetary Fund bill collectors for our banks, but also arm with military hardware to fight the wars that define the periphery of empire.

Despite periodic imprecations to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, Mead maintains, these countries are unlikely to escape from poverty. Not because their people are lazy or without skills, but because they are victims of blocked development: blocked by the global economic system that makes them poor, blocked by their own foreign-backed oligarchies that keep them that way. It is the Third World

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proletariat that makes possible the high standard of living of the industrialized countries. "The same forces that create prosperity and freedom here," he charges, "create misery and slavery there."

To the perennial question of why it is that the United States always seems to keep itself busy suppressing other people's revolutions, he has an answer. Not because Moscow will somehow gain a stranglehold on us if some miserable banana republic should throw out the comprador landlords and their uniformed goons, but because the job of American policy-makers is to maintain and expand an exploitative economic system. "The third-tier state is as often as not an entity created by the empire, with an economy dominated by the empire, and with a government whose politics, form, and personnel are chosen by and for the empire," he writes.

TRUE, all this is familiar, if stylishly presented: it is the vocabulary of neo-Marxist dependency theory. Mead's vision, too, is familiar—that of the subjugated masses of the Third World locked into an unjust order and finally breaking their chains through revolution. Of course, familiarity does not make this argument wrong; but there is something incomplete, and therefore misleading, about it. First, there is the problem that the third-tier country is becoming increasingly, perhaps tragically, irrelevant to the needs of the first-tier countries. Unless such countries have a scarce or exploitable natural resource, such as oil, they are more often a burden than a source of profit. There is more money to be made these days in computer chips than in cheap bananas. Chile is a vicious dictatorship today not because the United States needs cheap copper, but for a far more abstract reason: because American statesmen wanted to prevent the Soviets from having the supposed "advantage" of a Marxist government there. It was not economics but ideology, and great power gamesmanship, that induced Nixon and Kissinger to topple the elected president and bring in a friendly military dictatorship. Similarly Reagan has been conducting a proxy war in Nicaragua not to wring more sweat from the brows of peasants, but in the name of a "sphere of influence."

Now it is doubtless true that in many parts of what passes for our empire we find the conditions Mead describes: "a tiny elite linked to foreign interests; a small middle class unable to mediate the conflict; peaceful means for change are blocked—but existing conditions are intolerable." The Philippines come readily to mind, and it is difficult to see anything at the end of that road other than a protracted and increasingly bloody civil war followed by a Marxisant dictatorship. Whether that will ameliorate the life of the masses remains to be seen, although it is hard to see how their life could be much worse than it is at present.

But there is also the case of Brazil, for example, where the exploitation of the peasantry and proletariat comes straight from the heart of darkness. Is it really adequate, or even helpful, to describe such a country any longer as an American colony? The horrors perpetrated there are not inflicted by overseers doing the work of their Yankee masters—as one might, for example, say about a plantation like Guatemala. Brazilian exploiters are home grown, and they are increasingly eager to put the once-proud Northern imperialists in their place. With their protectionist walls they shut out our exports, and then they take away, with their low-wage industries, our overseas markets in such fields as aviation and automobiles. To imply that such a country is being diddled by Washington, however true it may have been in the past, really does not get us very far today.

Neither, for that matter, do the three tiers. Is there not also a fourth tier—what economists call the NICs, the newly industrializing countries? In theory these countries, for example South Korea and Singapore, should be miserably poor and prone to revolution, as not so many years ago they were. But now they are nudging the second tier also-rans, and already they are giving first-tier nations (ours, for example) a run for their money. A theory of imperialism that fails to take these factors into account—that overlooks the whole phenomenon of that new cliché, the Pacific Rim—is more hortatory than descriptive.

IF MEAD IS a bit romantic about the Third World, however, he is coldly analytical in examining the effect of empire on the American republic. Here lies the book's greatest strength, and what makes it worthy of special attention. He is clever and intellectually penetrating on the various hypocrisies of liberalism and conservatism, fundamentalism and the worship of the marketplace, the imperial itch, the anesthetic platitudes of our civic life, and the corruption of Republicanism into Caesarism. Like many radicals, he is as contemptuous of American liberalism, with its fetish of the marketplace and its shabby compromises with the need for social justice, as he is of conservatism. "A refusal to believe in real, irreconcilable class conflict is close to the essence of liberalism," he notes dismissively.

This does not mean, however, that he considers conservatism to be any better equipped to deal with the dilemma of an empire in decline. He sees American conservatives caught between the fundamentalist social wing of anti-abortionists, thought-controllers, and Bible-thumpers on one side, and simplistic market worshipers on the other. But the market, as he observes, is a radical, not a conservative, god, one that erodes traditional social institutions as it buries inefficient producers. The unacknowledged paradox of the right is that "conservative economics overthrows conservative order."

WHAT SOME CALL the Free World and what Mead calls the cold war empire is declining, in his analysis, not from lack of will, but from the inability of the economy to sustain it, and from the forces of opposition that it generates. While Third World insurrections are likely to spread—more Nicaraguas and Irans—declining domestic productivity, the loss of foreign markets, and mounting domestic demands for limited resources can only reduce the ability to intervene abroad. Sustained military intervention would weaken us politically and economically. Wall Street collapsed, after all, the same week that American ships blasted Iranian oil platforms in the Persian Gulf. Though the United States possesses awesome military power, the use of that power shakes the economic temple.

Ultimately, Mead argues, it will be economics, rather than the Soviets, that will make it impossible to sustain the remarkably successful but now deteriorating American empire. The steady shift of investment from high-wage to low-wage countries reduces demand on a global scale. This causes chronic overproduction, mounting unemployment, deterioration of the banking system, and political instability in the First World. There are signs that such conditions are emerging. Mead has his own solution to this crisis: increasing real wages in the Third World. And he concludes: "Only the active support of the powerful democratic

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forces in the advanced countries can resolve the impasse in the Third World; only a resolution of the Third World's political problems can protect the social compromise in the advanced countries." Thus by doing good, the rich countries will also do well and save themselves.

IF THIS historic compromise is not made, we can expect, he predicts, to be affected by the same class conflict endemic to the Third World. The economic surpluses that made it possible to satisfy the middle class and large portions of the working class will steadily diminish. The result will be a struggle to determine how society's resources shall be divided. "When politics visibly revolves around class, then theories of politics that begin with class look plausible." As unemployment and low wages seep from the Third World into the First, Mead foresees a resumption of social conflict that will present American democracy with one of its most serious challenges, as an embattled right, threatened by a revived populism on the left, flirts with authoritarianism.

Even if this scenario may seem farfetched, Mead may not be amiss in arguing that the age of consensus politics, with liberals essentially indistinguishable from conservatives except on the far fringes, may be coming to an end. To him, this offers an opportunity to Democrats, if they turn from their neoliberal fantasies of techno-utopias and their indifference to the working class and recall that they have been successful at the polls only when they have been able to "synthesize the moral and economic yearnings of the people into a line of pragmatic policy."

What Mead taketh away with one hand he giveth with the other. Although class warfare may lie around the corner, as unemployment mounts and markets shrink, so too lies opportunity in the form of a postimperial America that will allow its own exploited under- and working classes not only to enjoy the fruits of their wealth, but to take the lead in creating a more equitable world.

Mead's approach may strike some as too '60s-ish, even though it is written in the mood and vocabulary of the '80s. His Savonarola-like judgments on the evils of American imperialism may seem not only déjà vu, but *vieux jeu*—a nostalgic look at the old days when the United States actually did, or at least seemed to, run the world. Others will see in his analysis an accurate description of the mentality evidenced in the Iran-*contra* hearings. To my mind, his attack on empire is both justified and a bit outdated. Our various presidents and imperial administrators have inflicted suffering on innocent people in the name of noble causes. On the other hand, the notion that it was not only our right but our duty to run the world as we saw proper has evaporated with the trade surplus. Washington no longer defines the world, but is being defined by it. The arrogance may be undiminished, but the power is fast slipping.

Even if one cannot quite share Mead's indignation about the evils of our empire, his intensity of feeling gives this book a special thrust. His alternatives may strike some as too utopian or pessimistic; his economic "dependency" theories too mechanistic; and his whole approach suspiciously literary. Yet these are the qualities that raise his work far above the predictability and the dreariness of most studies of political economy. One must be impressed by the range of his knowledge, the maturity of his understanding, and the passion of his conviction. The value of this book is not its lament about the inequities of the American empire, but in its understanding of the forces that empire has unleashed, and of the inescapable dilemmas its success has created. A study of culture and history as well as of economics, *Mortal Splendor* is that rarest of things, a work of political imagination.

RONALD STEEL

DOWN BY LAW

A Guide to Critical Legal Studies by Mark Kelman

(Harvard University Press, 365 pp., $30)

One of the few remaining strongholds of the New Left has turned out, surprisingly enough, to be legal academia. Talk of social revolution thunders out of Harvard Law School, and radicals stalk the halls of Stanford and the University of Wisconsin. The Critical Legal Studies movement, or CLS, has given American legal education its liveliest moments of the last decade. The best stories come from Harvard: a CLS proposal that Harvard's janitors be paid as much as the law professors; student demonstrations and protests reminiscent of the '60s; a spectacular tenure fight, culminating in one professor's three-day sit-in in his own office. Despite recent setbacks at Harvard (one "crit" was denied tenure and president Derek Bok vetoed an offer to another), the crits have clearly become a major force in legal education.

For all the furor, however, the intellectual import of CLS has remained obscure. Finding a synthesis of CLS thought is no easy task, and Mark Kelman's book is an admirable attempt to remedy that lack. He offers an impressive survey of the major CLS writers and their relationship to other schools of legal thought. Although he considers himself a crit, he differs sharply from much that his colleagues have written: he might have called his book "A Critical Guide to Critical Legal Studies." Again and again, he strips away hyperbolic rhetoric or fallacious reasoning and exposes what he considers the heart of the CLS position. The problem is that after Kelman's incisive criticism, we are left with an intriguing intellectual edifice, but one that seems to have lost much of its political significance.

Most of Kelman's efforts, like those of the CLS movement generally, have been aimed at attacking "liberal" theory. The intent has been to show that liberal thought is shot-through with inescapable philosophical contradictions, which render it ultimately incoherent. Rather than confronting these philosophical dilemmas, Kelman says, the legal system attempts to "paper over them." There is a curiously academic air to this criticism: "philosophical incoherence" is presented as the ultimate indictment of a social system. Unless society is going to stop in its tracks until philosophers produce definitive answers, however, society had better "paper over" these dilemmas. Exposing the way societies do this is interesting, but it is hardly a devastating social criticism.

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Kelman begins his analysis with the dichotomy between standards and rules, which stems from an influential article by Duncan Kennedy in the *Harvard Law Review* in 1976. (Kennedy, by the way, was the advocate of equal pay for janitors.) Kennedy drew a distinction between rigid rules ("don't exceed 55 mph") and flexible standards ("don't drive dangerously"). He exhaustively catalogued all of the arguments to be made in particular situations for using either standards or rules. Almost everyone admired his thoroughness and ingenuity in assembling these arguments. More controversial was his own argument that standards are aligned with altruism and community values, while rules are aligned with individualism.

Kelman substantially revises Kennedy's argument. He points out numerous examples of situations in which it is the altruists who have favored rules, or in which individualists have demanded flexible standards. Instead, Kelman says, there is only an "aesthetic" link between the standards/rules issue and political norms: macho individualists tend to prefer rules because they are depersonalized and authoritative.

KELMAN VIEWS the preference for rules as a major flaw in "liberal theory"—a term he defines to include most post-feudal thinking. Of course, as he concedes, the current legal system makes rather heavy use of standards. Kelman's objection apparently is that rules still have the edge: most people think that clear rules should be used where possible, so the burden of proof is always on those who advocate standards to show why rules can't be used instead. This preference for rules often may be defeated, but its very existence, according to Kelman, is a bulwark against social change. "Rules," he says, "are the opiate of the masses."

The conventional defense of using rules is that they limit the discretion of government officials, thereby protecting individual liberty. One school of crits has argued that this benefit is illusory, however, because rules are entirely indeterminate. Any rule can be interpreted by a sufficiently capable lawyer to support any result in any given case. So the rules can't limit discretion; they can only conceal it.

Kelman takes a more complex position. He rejects the argument that the application of rules is indeterminate and unpredictable. (Kelman says this is no longer the CLS position, but it certainly figures heavily in the CLS articles I've read.) What he does argue is that the distinctions made in applying rules will inevitably be unrelated to any rational purpose that might underlie the rule. Also, rules will be given varying levels of enforcement, based on the discretion of prosecutors.

I doubt that any lawyer would deny that interpreting a rule may well involve drawing arbitrary lines, or that even the strictest rules are often tempered by discretion. Often, as both Kennedy and Kelman suggest, relatively flexible standards may be better than less flexible rules. This is all very interesting; but it is hard to see why Kelman and Kennedy both think they have scored some crucial point against liberalism, whether we construe "liberalism" to mean all post-feudal thinkers, or anyone who believes in the primacy of individual rights, or anyone who voted for Walter Mondale.

If we take liberalism in its ordinary political sense, I see no reason why liberals should have any particular attachment to inflexible rules as opposed to flexible standards. Indeed, I see no reason why liberals should concern themselves at all with the standards/rules dis-

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tinction. Many of the things liberals favor, such as generous welfare benefits, broad protection for racial minorities, and tolerance for diverse viewpoints, have nothing inherently rulelike about them. Whether we use rules or standards to achieve these goals seems entirely a matter of convenience in any given situation. Liberals can do perfectly well with what Kelman calls "the pragmatism that rejects the need for highfalutin generalities." Though Kelman seems to think this pragmatism is somehow anti-liberal, I think it comes much closer to the essence of liberalism than do the high-flying theorists whom Kelman so successfully criticizes.

Kelman's antipathy to liberalism becomes more understandable when he explains his view that Judge Richard Posner is the paradigm liberal. This may seem surprising, because Posner is the leader of the conservative "law and economics" movement. Kelman sees this movement, however, as the embodiment of the essential commitments of liberal thought, which are deeply embedded in the thinking of even those liberals who favor more government intervention than Posner does. Most important, he argues, liberal philosophy attempts to deny the possibility of objective values, and economists take this further by treating values as simply individual tastes to be factored into the economic equation. Kelman then proceeds to an extensive (and in places quite illuminating) examination of modern economic theory, particularly as practiced by law and economics scholars.

Kelman's attack on welfare economics is part of his effort to rebut the liberal belief that government should not impose a single set of "objectively correct" values on society. One of the fundamental tenets of liberalism is tolerance toward minority religions and ways of life. Some liberal thinkers (notably Ronald Dworkin) have argued that the government should never take a position on matters involving the value of different ways of life. Certainly Kelman is quite successful in demonstrating that complete neutrality is an absurdity. But neither some absolutist definition of neutrality, nor a metaphysical concern about the existence of objective values, motivates the basic liberal position. Instead, as John Rawls has pointed out, the liberal attachment to neutrality is politically based. In post-Reformation society, a wide divergence of fundamental philosophies is likely to exist unless it is forcibly suppressed. The liberal considers tolerance better than repression. And to rebut this view, an attack on welfare economics will not suffice: instead, the crits will have to demonstrate that suppressing "undesirable" groups would be a good government policy.

OTHER CLS TARGETS are the free market and individual autonomy. Kelman presents a strong theoretical case against the view that markets are inevitably economically desirable. He also argues persuasively that the principle of honoring every competent individual's voluntary choices cannot be the ultimate guide to ethics. The reason is that we need ethical standards to define competence and free choice.

Kelman's arguments are powerful, but they are pitched at too high a level of abstraction to be really persuasive. The theoretical reasons for favoring free markets may not be irrefutable, but they do seem consistent with our experience of the problems of planned economies. Even the Chinese and Soviet leaderships seem to acknowledge some of the practical advantages of market economies. To the extent that there has been a recent movement toward greater reliance on markets in Western democracies, it is due much less to Posner's writings than to unhappy experience with inept regulation by government agencies and incompetent operation of nationalized enterprises. As far as I am aware, neither Kelman nor any of the other crits has ever addressed the common sense arguments for market economies.

On the question of individual autonomy, the crits have also devoted too much attention to abstractions. As they say, there are all kinds of reasons why we sometimes guard people against making bad decisions. The crits' arguments are persuasive against an absolutist belief in autonomy. Still, the real problem is deciding when to limit autonomy in particular situations. The crits have largely failed to address concrete problems. One exception is Duncan Kennedy's analysis of plant closings, in which he argues that workers overvalue high wages, when they should be trying to get more power in the workplace. Yet apart from a passing comment that "people are idiots," he never really explains why the courts should force workers to adopt his view of their true interests. Rebutting Posner's economic theory of law is a long way from establishing that Harvard law pro-

LOG OF THE *SNOW STAR*

Chief asked if I'd go aloft, and in spite of boots
and other impedimenta I said yes
and went. The lower shrouds are easy and over
the top you go and then begins a single
line of ratlines. Tilberry right behind me,
so I said You go on ahead, and this he did.

Then Tilberry handed me the gasket
and Pedersen said to put it through, in fact.
Look LOOK said Tilberry there's corposants.

What's got into this old grump. From his nails,
from the spars, the dull light, the legend in hand:
St. Elmo's Fire. We didn't say it was.
Where did Tilberry get it. We didn't
say anything into the sky, bright before snow.

Then climbed down slowly but not so slowly
as to hold up Tilberry, who was climbing down
above me. Chief came out and called us
as for coffee. Made chafing gear on watch.
Learned Swedish profanity from Chips, who tried
to kiss me. Christine and I that night
also out on the jibboom; but up on the fore
t'gallant yard the schooner the *Snow Star*
is her own sailing model in the wand of minor planets.

CAROLINE KNOX

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fessors know what is good for steelworkers better than steelworkers themselves.

I REMEMBER being terribly impressed the first time I read a philosopher's proof that his opponents' theories were not only erroneous but incoherent. (I think it was Hilary Putnam skewering the logical positivists.) After a wider acquaintance with the philosophical literature, I learned that *everybody's* theories are philosophically incoherent, in the sense that a sufficiently rigorous analysis reveals contradictions and indeterminacy. So philosophical incoherence may not be such a serious flaw after all. The first time you see a crit show that a liberal position is contradictory, incoherent, and fundamentally arbitrary, you are impressed; after you see the trick done often enough, it loses its punch.

This is not to say that the crits, and Kelman in particular, have not made significant intellectual contributions in their criticisms of existing theories. Kelman and other crits (notably Mark Tushnet) have often offered useful criticisms of the work of major academic figures. But CLS did not start out with the goal of enriching the academic literature. It began as a political movement. The most fundamental question Kelman's book raises is whether CLS actually has any significant political message. Or to put it another way, since CLS is a critique of law, how does the legal system stand in the way of radical political change?

Kelman rejects several popular CLS answers. First, he is skeptical of claims that particular legal doctrines are designed to consolidate the power of elites such as the rich, the whites, or the men. The reason is that there is no necessary link between any particular set of legal doctrines and any given social conditions: "Two different cultures with ostensibly parallel needs may adopt opposite legal rules, and a single society may seemingly adopt contradictory responses to the same need." So CLS won't show us how particular American laws foster oppression. Second, Kelman does not believe that the legal system is designed to trick the masses into believing they are being governed under fair rules. Indeed, he argues that this is not really a CLS view at all, although many readers of the CLS literature would disagree.

Then what *is* wrong with law? Kelman's answer seems to be that law gives us a wrong mentality. It makes us rely too much on verbal categories, rather than on trying to grasp real human needs; it focuses too much attention on legal solutions to social problems; it confuses us by pretending that we are not responsible for our decisions because they are somehow made by impersonal rules rather than by ourselves. Kelman is correct, I believe, in identifying these as costs of excessive legalism, and we would do well to reduce their prevalence in the legal system. But this hardly requires radical social change.

Kelman also argues that legal discourse "privileges" certain positions by treating them as the norms, so that exceptions have to be specially justified. One of these norms is individual autonomy; we require some justification for restrictions on individuals' choices about their own lives. We think the government should have some reason before it interferes with people's choices. This slight presumption in favor of liberty does not strike me as unreasonable.

Ultimately, Kelman's argument is that modern society is based on the "lies we tell ourselves." Law, indeed everything else in modern culture, fosters oppression because it makes us incapable of seeing the world as it really is. Yet Kelman also attacks liberals for believing in the existence of an ahistorical reality; he says that "all our thoughts are, and seemingly must be, language mediated." (There are some standard philosophical responses to this kind of relativism; I will merely note that Putnam has demonstrated that relativism is incoherent too.)

SO WHAT can we do? The crits have seemed unwilling to explain what kind of society they want, or what kind of social change they would like to see. Kelman seems to suggest that we cannot even describe a better world. We can only perceive reality through our current culture, whose most nefarious result is that it prevents us from even imagining what reality is like. (As Stanley Fish has pointed out, the CLS view that all reality is socially mediated seems inconsistent with the idea that social concepts distort reality—but again let's not quibble about consistency.) There seems to be no exit: any attempt at radical thought must be carried out within a language that is designed precisely to exclude the possibility of truly radical thought.

The real message of Kelman's book is finally one of despair. The crits have never tried seriously to propose concrete social changes; indeed, it is hard to imagine what they could propose that would not be essentially reformist. The upshot

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BACKGROUND
The show is based on the 5 years a young Dane, Jacob Holdt, hitchhiked over 100,000 miles in the USA. He bought film for his camera by selling blood twice weekly. He lived in more than 400 homes - from the poorest southern sharecroppers, to some of America's wealthiest families (Pabst, Rockefeller). He joined the rebellion in Wounded Knee, followed criminals in the ghettos during muggings, sneaked inside to work in southern slave camps and infiltrated secret Ku Klux Klan meetings. While working with prisoners he saw two of his friends assassinated. By the time he returned to Denmark 12 of his American friends had been murdered.

THE BOOK
The book, which is based on the show, is an international bestseller. The Village Voice revealed that the U.S. State Department grew worried about its impact overseas and commissioned photographers to present the "other side" of America. Written in a personal tone it is now a popular classroom supplement in American schools. 800 photos, the bulk in color.

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of Kelman's argument is that even utopianism is out of reach, that we cannot imagine a world that would avoid the CLS critique. All Kelman can recommend is a shot in the dark. "The spirit of the anti-rights, anti-legalist approach is to abandon *known* distorting categories, to leap ahead, not fully aware how one will reconstruct the world." That is not much of a political program.

DANIEL FARBER

Daniel Farber is Henry Fletcher Professor of Law at the University of Minnesota.

OUTLANDISH TRUTHS

The Playmaker
by Thomas Keneally

(Simon and Schuster, 353 pp., $18.95)

"Antibiotics and plumbing," writes Thomas Keneally in the epilogue to his new novel, "have made melodrama laughable to the modern reader." But it is the melodrama of an inherently outlandish history, one already imbued with the "flavor of dramatic excess," with which any chronicler of Australia's founding must contend. If that chronicler is a writer of novels, the challenge is doubly great: What role does the novelist play when the truth is a ready-made fiction?

The Playmaker appears at first glance to be a brilliant fantasy: a group of the first transported felons to what we now call Australia perform, under the direction of an English Army overseer, George Farquhar's Restoration comedy *The Recruiting Officer*. But what seems sheer artistry turns out to be documented fact. Farquhar's tour de force of double meanings and confused identities was indeed the first play to be produced in that new world; it was performed by an all-convict cast in 1789 in Port Jackson.

From this premise, Keneally's historical fiction traverses a predictable course. It follows Lt. Ralph Clark (on whose published journal Keneally relies heavily) through his direction of Farquhar's play; his romance with Mary Brenham, the clothes thief he "recruits" to be his leading lady and who later bears him a child; and his return to England and the beloved wife he's left behind. Keneally's epilogue tells of Clark's eventual death several years later in the service of his country, a death concurrent with those of his son (of yellow fever) and his wife (in childbirth):

> So in a pulse of time the blood and all the complex dreams and very ordinary fervors of the Playmaker were extinguished, except for his lagwife Brenham and the new world child Alicia. Of them fiction could make much, though history says nothing.

Here, then, is the more compelling story Keneally might have written, had he been writing fiction. Instead he chooses to tread the already beaten path of a legitimized, mainstream history. To what end? Is this merely a matter of accenting, a dash of color here, a shadow or two there? Or does Keneally have something else up his sleeve?

Judging from the metaphysical core of his project—Ralph's thwarted attempt to stage a play amid the phantasmagoria of real life—it seems that Keneally's true interest in rehashing the past is a theoretical one. He intends to probe the fundamental dichotomies of art and life, fact and illusion. His book, with five parts and an epilogue, parallels the structure of the play whose production it depicts. The problem is, the play that Keneally makes of history is thwarted too: it doesn't come off as fiction.

His "hero," a weak-kneed, homesick sailor plagued by nightmares about his estranged family, finds that the play he has been assigned to direct in honor of the king's birthday has begun, however subliminally, to direct him. Having "recruited" his cast, Ralph falls in love with Mary Brenham, just as the play's recruiting officer, Captain Plume, falls in love with Silvia, the character Brenham portrays. Ralph's pursuit of her, complete with fervid chases through the night and women dressed as officers, is as stiffly theatrical as Plume's of Silvia. In addition, Ralph alters Farquhar's text so that it mirrors his own professional exploits: grenadiers become marines, Her Majesty becomes His Majesty, the French King becomes the American traitors, the Battle of Höchstädt becomes the Battle of Bunker Hill. And before long, art has become hopelessly intertwined with life—getting in the way of his ability to direct.

Ironically, the one and only performance of Ralph's "play" is interrupted and supplanted by the capture (which he himself has instigated) of an escaped rapist, and the poisoning of a vengeful madam. Life, he cannily observes, has "out-theatred them." But Ralph hasn't given up on the making of fiction yet. After the perpetrators have been exposed, he turns to the poisoner, one of his players, and warns, in the book's last, desperate sentence (barring Keneally's epilogue), "I hope that you still remember your lines."

Keneally ends up with an aborted performance and a bewildered audience. His entertainment, like Ralph's, is diverting enough, for a while. His characters are eccentric enough; his play within a play conceit is deftly executed as far as it goes. But Keneally leaves his complex theoretical "fiction" hanging. For "though they are fantastical creatures," he admits regrettably in his epilogue, these characters all did live. Keneally has not created them, or their situation; he has merely given them lines to speak—and depended on our lack of familiarity with the Australian past to transform fact into melodrama (however "laughable" that melodrama may be). Playing on the fantastic aspects of reality proves to be a wan substitute for evoking a sense of reality within his own fiction, which is the novelist's conventional task.

Keneally draws attention to the unconventionality of his approach. One of the key actors in Ralph's play is Nancy Turner, an alleged perjurer who, it later turns out, has been telling the truth all along, hoping it would be interpreted as perjury (considered the most heinous of crimes). "That was why her act in court excited me as a prospective playmaker," Ralph reflects. "I thought she was a perjurer playing the part of truth-teller, but her ploy was deeper than that—she was a truth-teller playing a perjurer." In this character, Keneally has indirectly acknowledged his own role.

Despite his attempts at perjury, however, at making fiction out of fact, Keneally's yarn of convict transportation

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doesn't transport. His venture is ineffectual, lacking the daring contrivance of a masterful crime. Like his players, the petty thieves shipped to this desolate outpost because their schemes weren't grand enough to succeed, he aspires to high theater—for "the world forgives actors anything." But the script has already been played out, and more colorfully, by historians such as Robert Hughes (*The Fatal Shore*).

Keneally is the fantasist at odds with distortion, the fabulist at odds with exaggeration. He serves out his time; he writes the novel shackled to the straight and narrow, to history. And then in his epilogue he tells us why he has played the model prisoner: to make a point about the genre in which he writes—to demonstrate the constraints of conventional historical fiction in the face of fantastic reality. Yet Keneally's latest foray into his nation's past is in the end a theoretical exercise. His recycled plot and characters are too weak to sustain the weight of his speculations and juxtapositions.

This writer about Australia is finally too tame for that extraordinary world of inversion—where, as Hughes so vividly puts it, "it was high summer in January, where trees kept their leaves but shed their bark, where squat brown birds roared with laughter and thin stinking blacks, painted like pantomime skeletons, mocked them with their freedom." He should have taken a leaf from his characters' (already written) book: crime, when thoroughly criminal, pays. In the ghostlike figures of the illegitimate child and wife, he had a promising idea for a story; he should have run with it.

JENNIFER KRAUSS

Jennifer Krauss is an assistant editor at the *New York Review of Books*.

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

ber 7). He is upset that Gorbachev both praised Stalin for winning World War II and commended Stalin for expelling Trotsky from the Soviet leadership. Up to now I thought that only the lunatic right regretted the Soviet victory in the Second World War. Surely even neoliberals regard the defeat of Hitler as a good thing. Gorbachev was entirely justifed in praising Stalin for leading the winning side. As for Trotsky, most of what we know about him suggests that had he become the Soviet leader he would have been as repressive as Stalin in domestic policy and more adventurist in foreign policy. Trotsky was like Mao in that both were romantic Marxist revolutionaries who were also military geniuses. It is fortunate that Trostky was never given a chance to lead his own Cultural Revolution or Great Leap Forward. Gorbachev is correct in rejecting the legacy of the advocate of permanent revolution.

KEVIN SWEENEY
Chicago, Illinois

MIAMI EXISTENTIALISM

To the editors:

Nicholas Lemann, in "Mirage of Miami" (November 23), wonders why South Florida so quickly embraced "Miami Vice," suggesting the answer may be that it "lacked the kind of self-fulfilling stereotype that . . . Texas and California have." There is more to it than that. As Walker Percy observed in his novel *The Moviegoer* (1960), Americans happily acknowledge that video projections are more accurate and thus more believable than "real" life. When Bill Holden walks down a street in Percy's New Orleans, an "aura of heightened reality moves with him and all who fall within it feel it," feeling too that they have thereby won title to existence. "Miami Vice" meets a similar existential need.

Texans know all about such things, as a visit to the Alamo reveals. Upon first stepping into the Cradle of Texas Liberty one is confronted with a nearly life-sized portrait of John Wayne, fierce defender of the Alamo. Without the Duke, it seems, the Texas Revolution would never have occurred.

CHAR MILLER
San Antonio, Texas

RIGHT ON BOTH COUNTS

To the editors:

TNR owes an apology to Kathleen Kerwin of the *Detroit News*. She was made to appear rather foolish in the December 21 Notebook for reporting, in two separate headlines on the same day, that the economy was forecast to be both "healthy" and "sluggish." I work with the University of Michigan's Research Seminar in Quantitative Economics, which did indeed project a healthy performance by the national economy but sluggishness for the state economy in 1988.

GERARD M. ANDERSON
Ann Arbor, Michigan

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NEW YORK DIARIST

Greed Update

I'VE TOLD MY WIFE that if Tom Kean calls, to ask for his number and tell him I'll get back to him. The reason I'm not ready to take a call from the governor of New Jersey right now is that I'm trying to work out a deal with the city that will keep us in New York on a long-term basis. The package we're talking about would include a break on income taxes over the next 35 years, plus relief from sales taxes on some home improvement and professional items I have in mind and a low-interest bond that would be a big help with the mortgage. Basically the kind of deal NBC got recently. All I'm asking for, I tell my wife, is a level playing field. What you ought to be asking for, she says, is a full deck. It's a classic trade-off. My wife thinks that for prestige and convenience, Manhattan has it all over New Jersey. Sure there's a premium to be paid, but when friends come to visit from Washington or Boston, they want the best—in art, in entertainment, in pasta. And when they leave, they want to be able to make fun of us for having to put up with so much expense and aggravation to live here. If we lived in Secaucus, she says, not only would they have nothing to enjoy while they were here, they wouldn't be able to feel so superior when they left. Look, I explain, the Secaucus thing is essentially a bargaining chip. Do you think NBC was *serious* about moving David Letterman to New Jersey? Consider the facts. First they decline Donald Trump's invitation to sign on for his proposed Television City. Why? Because if they had moved there, *they* wouldn't have gotten the tax break. Trump would have. Then they whisper "Jersey," that magical word, which gets the attention of the mayor's office. About five minutes later their real estate taxes have been cut in half (saving $72 million), they've got an $800 million tax-exempt bond issue, and they're buying $1.1 billion worth of equipment to renovate their studios in Rockefeller Center without paying dollar one in sales tax. I'm a writer, I point out, practically in the same business as NBC, if you think about it. Why should I have to pay sales tax on my word processor? You didn't, my wife reminds me. You bought it in New Jersey and had it shipped. She's right. Maybe New Jersey is better off, relative to us, where it is.

DO YOU FEEL THAT the one clear lesson of this fall's stock market disaster and attendant convulsions—the whole fiscal thing, as George Bush might put it—is that macroeconomic forecasting is a game anyone can play? Do you have the impression, after reading and listening to the experts, that nobody really has the first idea how one piece of the world economy fits with any other piece, that you can put the puzzle together just about any way you choose and sound like a pro? Are you still wondering, after all the analysis, whether the crash means that a few overreachers face foreclosures on their second homes, or that everyone should consider a return in Christmas giving this year to the traditional lump of coal? Now NEW YORK DIARIST offers some commonsense advice on what to expect in the psycho-economic near term.

QUESTION: I don't own any stocks or real estate, I'm living in my car, and my cash position is pretty negligible. Will the crisis affect me?

NEW YORK DIARIST: A typically self-centered question for these self-centered times: I didn't get in on the boom, so now I'm doing OK, right? Wrong, friend. Economics is a team game, and you'd better get with the team concept. What once trickled down can surely trickle back up. Why not give your broker a call today?

Q: Now that we've had this correction, are there any good buys out there?

NYD: Some analysts are looking at the aspirin-seltzer group. The thinking is that as the dollar continues to fall in world markets, the price of sushi will rise domestically, leading to a move in upscale fast foods toward Mexican, Cuban, and other Latin cuisines, thus creating the demand for speedy relief. Of course, if deficit reductions exceed projections, driving out foreign capital and lowering interest rates without stagflation, well . . . you can fill in the rest of the scenario yourself.

Q: I switched from precious metals to stocks on October 16. Since then, I've been buying options on issues where the price-earnings ratio exceeds the S&P average. I've got 20 percent of my portfolio in a closed-end investment fund, indexed to the value of the Swiss franc, and ten percent in long-term Treasuries and assorted municipal paper. What can I expect on, say, a six-month horizon?

NYD: Scaly red patches may form on the backs of the hands and the joints of the toes. These may cause irritation from time to time; try soaking in a mild solution of baking soda and lukewarm (not hot!) water. Exposure to sunlight for brief periods is also recommended. If itching persists, or if swelling occurs, consult a physician.

I WAS SURPRISED to read a few weeks ago in this space an attack, by one who styles himself "F. B.," on the role of the press in the Douglas Ginsburg affair. "Reporters I know don't think there's anything wrong with pot smoking in your past, even in your 30s," writes F. B. "But when Ginsburg admitted as much, the press responded with a tut-tut and acted as if a great public offense had been committed." Leaving aside the novel premise that it's news only if reporters haven't tried it themselves, I think this analysis of the Ginsburg episode misses the moral point. A lot of people not otherwise favorably disposed toward a Reagan nominee may have felt that all the business about the daughters' last names and the dating service and the pot smoking and so forth made Ginsburg a more interesting and attractive character. I didn't. It wasn't that people who want to serve on the Supreme Court ought to adhere more strictly to the letter of the law than everyone else, on grounds that someday they will be expected to apply the letter of the law pretty strictly to others. That would be using the same test for judges that F. B. wants to use for journalists. It's that here was a man who had obviously enjoyed many of the fruits of '60s permissivism, now coming round in a three-piece suit as a protégé of the bluenoses in the Reagan administration who want to make any "experimentation" in private life fit matter for public policy. Douglas Ginsburg stands for a lot of people in my generation who did what they liked when they were young, and who now preach propriety and restraint to those younger than themselves. I don't feel sorry for Ginsburg. He had things both ways. He had his cake, and then he had to eat it.

L. M.

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JOBS. WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?

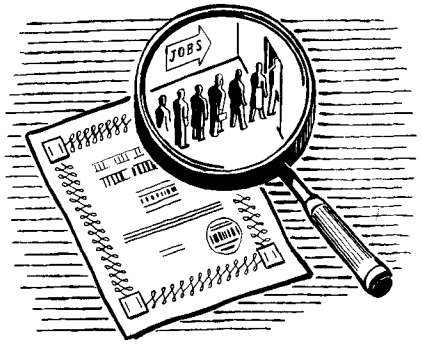
Over the last ten years, the United States has created more jobs than all EEC countries combined. Our rate of employment has continued to outpace Japan's. And according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the quality of jobs we're creating has remained high, with about a third in the managerial, professional category.

LARGE COMPANIES LOSE JOBS.

It takes capital to create jobs. But in today's markets, capital formation doesn't always guarantee job formation. Since 1980, companies rated investment grade by Moody's and Standard & Poor's have issued over 80% of America's public corporate debt. Yet, in the last three years employment among these investment grade companies has declined by 4%.

Similarly, from 1980 through 1985, America's total industrial employment increased by more than 8%. But the large industrial companies have reduced their work force by almost 12%.

Where are America's new jobs coming from? The answer can be found in our nation's medium-sized and smaller growth companies. These businesses may lack the size, history, or capital structure needed to qualify for investment grade ratings. Yet they're putting their capital to productive use, creating the jobs and the growth America needs to remain vital and competitive.



To fund their growth, over 1,200 of these companies have issued debt and preferred stock rated less than investment grade. These securities provide the issuers with a cost-effective source of long-term fixed-rate funds. High yield debt is an attractive alternative to expensive equity offerings, and it frees companies from the high costs, variable rates, shorter terms and restrictive covenants of bank loans and private placements.

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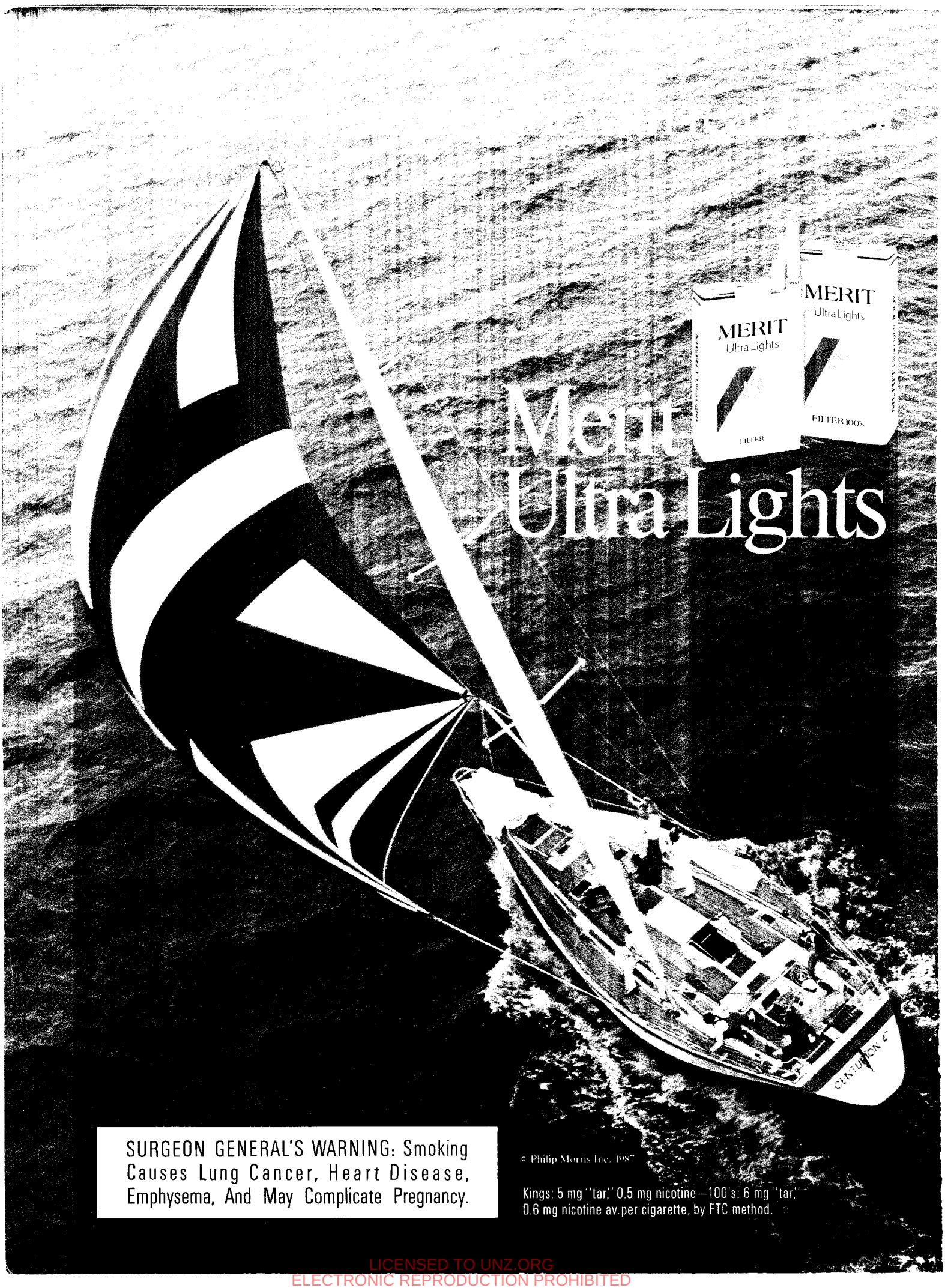
MERIT
Ultra Lights
FILTER
MERIT
Ultra Lights
FILTER 100's
Merit
Ultra Lights
SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema, And May Complicate Pregnancy.
© Philip Morris Inc. 1987
Kings: 5 mg "tar," 0.5 mg nicotine—100's: 6 mg "tar," 0.6 mg nicotine av.per cigarette, by FTC method.

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